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THE WORKS OF GEORGE MEREDITH

MEMORIAL EDITION

VOLUME

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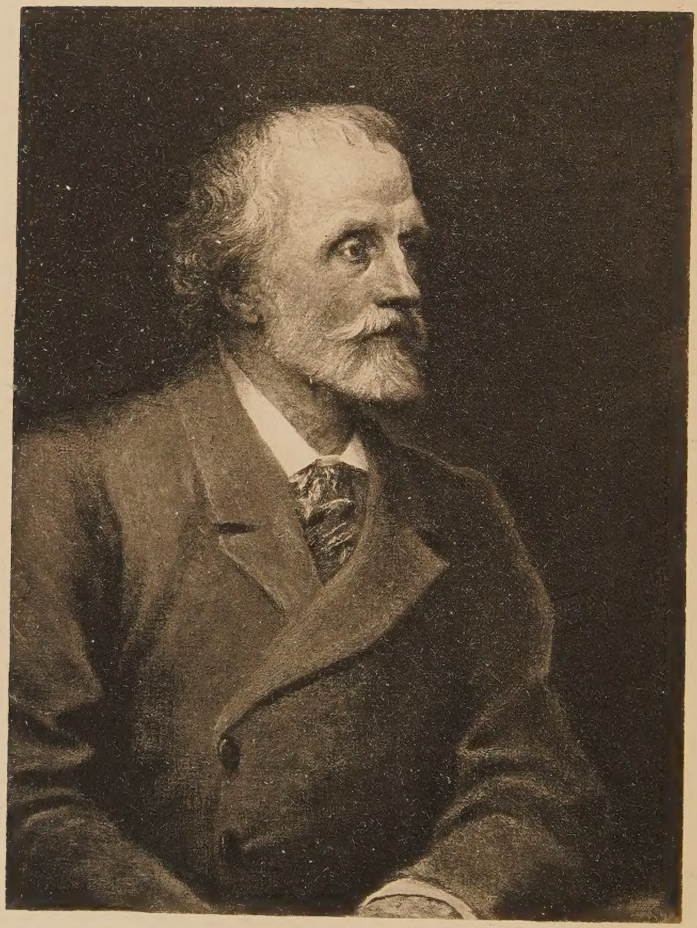

George Meredith 1893.

GEORGE MEREDITH

BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER

VOL. I

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1910

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VOL. II

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GEORGE MEREDITH IN 1893 . . *Frontispiece*

From the picture by the late G. F. Watts, R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery, London. By permission of Mrs. G. F. Watts.

THE ESTUARY FROM HOLLY HILL. . *Facing page* 145

Holly Hill was at the time the novel was written the home of Admiral Maxse, an intimate friend of the author, who stood as Radical candidate for Southampton in 1868. The view extends over the estuary of the Hamble River and Southampton Water to the New Forest.

From a photograph taken by Walter Bonington in 1910.

BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER

VOL. I

BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER

CHAPTER I

THE CHAMPION OF HIS COUNTRY

When young Nevil Beauchamp was throwing off his midshipman's jacket for a holiday in the garb of peace, we had across Channel a host of dreadful military officers flashing swords at us for some critical observations of ours upon their sovereign, threatening Afric's fires and savagery. The case occurred in old days now and again, sometimes, upon imagined provocation, more furiously than at others. We were unarmed, and the spectacle was distressing. We had done nothing except to speak our minds according to the habit of the free, and such an explosion appeared as irrational and excessive as that of a powder-magazine in reply to nothing more than the light of a spark. It was known that a valorous General of the Algerian wars proposed to make a clean march to the capital of the British Empire at the head of ten thousand men; which seems a small quantity to think much about, but they wore wide red breeches blown out by Fame, big as her cheeks, and a ten thousand of that sort would never think of retreating. Their spectral advance on quaking London through Kentish hop-gardens, Sussex corn-fields, or by the pleasant hills of Surrey, after a gymnastic leap over the riband of salt water, haunted many pillows. And now those horrid

shouts of the legions of Cæsar, crying to the inheritor of an invading name to lead them against us, as the origin of his title had led the army of Gaul of old gloriously, scared sweet sleep. We saw them in imagination lining the opposite shore; eagle and standard-bearers, and *gallifers,* brandishing their fowls and their banners in a manner to frighten the decorum of the universe. Where were our men?

The returns of the census of our population were oppressively satisfactory, and so was the condition of our youth. We could row and ride and fish and shoot, and breed largely: we were athletes with a fine history and a full purse: we had first-rate sporting guns, unrivalled park-hacks and hunters, promising babies to carry on the renown of England to the next generation, and a wonderful Press, and a Constitution the highest reach of practical human sagacity. But where were our armed men? where our great artillery? where our proved captains, to resist a sudden sharp trial of the national mettle? Where was the first line of England's defence, her navy? These were questions, and Ministers were called upon to answer them. The Press answered them boldly, with the appalling statement that we had no navy and no army. At the most we could muster a few old ships, a couple of experimental vessels of war, and twenty-five thousand soldiers indifferently weaponed.

We were in fact as naked to the Imperial foe as the merely painted Britons.

This being apprehended, by the aid of our own shortness of figures and the agitated images of the red-breeched only waiting the signal to jump and be at us, there ensued a curious exhibition that would be termed, in simple language, writing to the newspapers, for it took the outward form of letters: in reality, it was the deliberate saddling of our ancient nightmare of Invasion,

putting the postillion on her, and trotting her along the high-road with a winding horn to rouse old Panic. Panic we will, for the sake of convenience, assume to be of the feminine gender and a spinster, though properly she should be classed with the large mixed race of mental and moral neuters which are the bulk of comfortable nations. She turned in her bed at first like the sluggard of the venerable hymnist: but once fairly awakened, she directed a stare toward the terrific foreign contortionists, and became in an instant all stormy nightcap and fingers starving for the bell-rope. Forthwith she burst into a series of shrieks, howls, and high piercing notes that caused even the parliamentary Opposition, in the heat of an assault on a parsimonious Government, to abandon its temporary advantage and be still awhile. Yet she likewise performed her part with a certain deliberation and method, as if aware that it was a part she had to play in the composition of a singular people. She did a little mischief by dropping on the stock-markets; in other respects she was harmless, and, inasmuch as she established a subject for conversation, useful.

Then, lest she should have been taken too seriously, the Press, which had kindled, proceeded to extinguish her with the formidable engines called leading articles, which fling fire or water, as the occasion may require. It turned out that we had ships ready for launching, and certain regiments coming home from India; hedges we had, and a spirited body of yeomanry; and we had pluck and patriotism, the father and mother of volunteers innumerable. Things were not so bad.

Panic, however, sent up a plaintive whine. What country had anything like our treasures to defend?—countless riches, beautiful women, an inviolate soil! True, and it must be done. Ministers were authoritatively summoned to set to work immediately. They

replied that they had been at work all the time, and were at work now. They could assure the country, that though they flourished no trumpets, they positively guaranteed the safety of our virgins and coffers.

Then the people, rather ashamed, abused the Press for unreasonably disturbing them. The Press attacked old Panic and stripped her naked. Panic, with a desolate scream, arraigned the parliamentary Opposition for having inflated her to serve base party purposes. The Opposition challenged the allegations of Government, pointed to the trimness of army and navy during its term of office, and proclaimed itself watch-dog of the country, which is at all events an office of a kind. Hereupon the ambassador of yonder ireful soldiery let fall a word, saying, by the faith of his Master, there was no necessity for watch-dogs to bark; an ardent and a reverent army had but fancied its beloved chosen Chief insulted; the Chief and chosen held them in; he, despite obloquy, discerned our merits and esteemed us.

So, then, Panic, or what remained of her, was put to bed again. The Opposition retired into its kennel growling. The People coughed like a man of two minds, doubting whether he has been divinely inspired or has cut a ridiculous figure. The Press interpreted the cough as a warning to Government; and Government launched a big ship with hurrahs, and ordered the recruiting-sergeant to be seen conspicuously.

And thus we obtained a moderate reinforcement of our arms.

It was not arrived at by connivance all round, though there was a look of it. Certainly it did not come of accident, though there was a look of that as well. Nor do we explain much of the secret by attributing it to the working of a complex machinery. The housewife's remedy of a good shaking for the invalid who will not arise and

dance away his gout, partly illustrates the action of the Press upon the country: and perhaps the country shaken may suffer a comparison with the family chariot of the last century, built in a previous one, commodious, furnished agreeably, being all that the inside occupants could require of a conveyance, until the report of horsemen crossing the heath at a gallop sets it dishonourably creaking and complaining in rapid motion, and the squire curses his miserly purse that would not hire a guard, and his dame says, I told you so!—Foolhardy man, to suppose, because we have constables in the streets of big cities, we have dismissed the highwayman to limbo. And here he is, and he will cost you fifty times the sum you would have laid out to keep him at a mile's respectful distance! But see, the wretch is bowing: he smiles at our carriage, and tells the coachman that he remembers he has been our guest, and really thinks we need not go so fast. He leaves word for you, sir, on your peril to denounce him on another occasion from the magisterial Bench, for that albeit he is a gentleman of the road, he has a mission to right society, and succeeds legitimately to that bold Good Robin Hood who fed the poor.—Fresh from this polite encounter, the squire vows money for his personal protection: and he determines to speak his opinion of Sherwood's latest captain as loudly as ever. That he will, I do not say. It might involve a large sum per annum.

Similes are very well in their way. None can be sufficient in this case without levelling a finger at the taxpayer—nay, directly mentioning him. He is the key of our ingenuity. He pays his dues; he will not pay the additional penny or two wanted of him, that we may be a step or two ahead of the day we live in, unless he is frightened. But scarcely anything less than the wild alarum of a tocsin will frighten him. Consequently the

tocsin has to be sounded; and the effect is woeful past measure: his hugging of his army, his kneeling on the shore to his navy, his implorations of his yeomanry and his hedges, are sad to note. His bursts of pot-valiancy (the male side of the maiden Panic within his bosom) are awful to his friends. Particular care must be taken after he has begun to cool and calculate his chances of security, that he do not gather to him a curtain of volunteers and go to sleep again behind them; for they cost little in proportion to the much they pretend to be to him. Patriotic taxpayers doubtless exist: prophetic ones, provident ones, do not. At least we show that we are wanting in them. The taxpayer of a free land taxes himself, and his disinclination for the bitter task, save under circumstances of screaming urgency—as when the night-gear and bed-linen of old convulsed Panic are like the churned Channel sea in the track of two hundred hostile steamboats, let me say—is of the kind the gentle schoolboy feels when death or an expedition has relieved him of his tyrant, and he is entreated notwithstanding to go to his books.

Will you not own that the working of the system for scaring him and bleeding is very ingenious? But whether the ingenuity comes of native sagacity, as it is averred by some, or whether it shows an instinct labouring to supply the deficiencies of stupidity, according to others, I cannot express an opinion. I give you the position of the country undisturbed by any moralizings of mine. The youth I introduce to you will rarely let us escape from it; for the reason that he was born with so extreme and passionate a love for his country, that he thought all things else of mean importance in comparison: and our union is one in which, following the counsel of a sage and seer, I must try to paint for you what is, not that which I imagine. This day, this hour, this life, and even politics, the centre

and throbbing heart of it (enough, when unburlesqued, to blow the down off the gossamer-stump of fiction at a single breath, I have heard tell), must be treated of: men, and the ideas of men, which are—it is policy to be emphatic upon truisms—are actually the motives of men in a greater degree than their appetites: these are my theme; and may it be my fortune to keep them at blood-heat, and myself calm as a statue of Memnon in prostrate Egypt! He sits there waiting for the sunlight; I here, and readier to be musical than you think. I can at any rate be impartial; and do but fix your eyes on the sunlight striking him and swallowing the day in rounding him, and you have an image of the passive receptivity of shine and shade I hold it good to aim at, if at the same time I may keep my characters at blood-heat. I shoot my arrows at a mark that is pretty certain to return them to me. And as to perfect success, I should be like the panic-stricken shopkeepers in my alarm at it; for I should believe that genii of the air fly above our tree-tops between us and the incognizable spheres, catching those ambitious shafts they deem it a promise of fun to play pranks with.

Young Mr. Beauchamp at that period of the panic had not the slightest feeling for the taxpayer. He was therefore unable to penetrate the mystery of our roundabout way of enlivening him. He pored over the journals in perplexity, and talked of his indignation nightly to his pretty partners at balls, who knew not they were lesser Andromedas of his dear Andromeda country, but danced and chatted and were gay, and said they were sure he would defend them. The men he addressed were civil. They listened to him, sometimes with smiles and sometimes with laughter, but approvingly, liking the lad's quick spirit. They were accustomed to the machinery

employed to give our land a shudder and to soothe it, and generally remarked that it meant nothing. His uncle Everard, and his uncle's friend Stukely Culbrett, expounded the nature of Frenchmen to him, saying that they were uneasy when not periodically thrashed; it would be cruel to deny them their crow beforehand; and so the pair of gentlemen pooh-poohed the affair; agreeing with him, however, that we had no great reason to be proud of our appearance, and the grounds they assigned for this were the activity and the prevalence of the ignoble doctrines of Manchester—a power whose very existence was unknown to Mr. Beauchamp. He would by no means allow the burden of our national disgrace to be cast on one part of the nation. We were insulted, and all in a poultry-flutter, yet no one seemed to feel it but himself! Outside the Press and Parliament, which must necessarily be the face we show to the foreigner, absolute indifference reigned. Navy men and red-coats were willing to join him or anybody in sneers at a clipping and paring miserly Government, but they were insensible to the insult, the panic, the startled-poultry show, the shame of our exhibition of ourselves in Europe. It looked as if the blustering French Guard were to have it all their own way. And what would they, what could they but, think of us! He sat down to write them a challenge.

He is not the only Englishman who has been impelled by a youthful chivalry to do that. He is perhaps the youngest who ever did it, and consequently there were various difficulties to be overcome. As regards his qualifications for addressing Frenchmen, a year of his præ-neptunal time had been spent in their capital city for the purpose of acquiring French of Paris, its latest refinements of pronunciation and polish, and the art of conversing. He had read the French tragic poets and Molière; he could even relish the Gallic-classic—'Qu'il

mourut!' and he spoke French passably, being quite beyond the Bullish treatment of the tongue. Writing a letter in French was a different undertaking. The one he projected bore no resemblance to an ordinary letter. The briefer the better, of course; but a tone of dignity was imperative, and the tone must be individual, distinctive, Nevil Beauchamp's, though not in his native language. First he tried his letter in French, and lost sight of himself completely. 'Messieurs de la Garde Française,' was a good beginning; the remainder gave him a false air of a masquerader, most uncomfortable to see; it was Nevil Beauchamp in moustache and imperial, and bag-breeches badly fitting. He tried English, which was really himself, and all that heart could desire, supposing he addressed a body of midshipmen just a little loftily. But the English, when translated, was bald and blunt to the verge of offensiveness.

'Gentlemen of the French Guard,
'I take up the glove you have tossed us. I am an Englishman. That will do for a reason.'

This might possibly pass with the gentlemen of the English Guard. But read:—

'Messieurs de la Garde Française,
'J'accepte votre gant. Je suis Anglais. La raison est suffisante.'

And imagine French Guardsmen reading it!

Mr. Beauchamp knew the virtue of punctiliousness in epithets and phrases of courtesy toward a formal people, and as the officers of the French Guard were gentlemen of birth, he would have them to perceive in him their equal at a glance. On the other hand, a bare excess of phrasing distorted him to a likeness of Mascarille playing Marquis. How to be English and think French! The business was

as laborious as if he had started on the rough sea of the Channel to get at them in an open boat.

The lady governing his uncle Everard's house, Mrs. Rosamund Culling, entered his room and found him writing with knitted brows. She was young, that is, she was not in her middle-age; and they were the dearest of friends; each had given the other proof of it. Nevil looked up and beheld her lifted finger.

'You are composing a love-letter, Nevil!' The accusation sounded like irony.

'No,' said he, puffing; 'I wish I were.'

'What can it be, then?'

He thrust pen and paper a hand's length on the table, and gazed at her.

'My dear Nevil, is it really anything serious?' said she.

'I am writing French, ma'am.'

'Then I may help you. It must be very absorbing, for you did not hear my knock at your door.'

Now, could he trust her? The widow of a British officer killed nobly fighting for his country in India, was a person to be relied on for active and burning sympathy in a matter that touched the country's honour. She was a woman, and a woman of spirit. Men had not pleased him of late. Something might be hoped from a woman.

He stated his occupation, saying that if she would assist him in his French she would oblige him; the letter must be written and must go. This was uttered so positively that she bowed her head, amused by the funny semi-tone of defiance to the person to whom he confided the secret. She had humour, and was ravished by his English boyishness, with the novel blush of the heroical-nonsensical in it.

Mrs. Culling promised him demurely that she would listen, objecting nothing to his plan, only to his French.

'Messieurs de la Garde Française!' he commenced.

Her criticism followed swiftly.

'I think you are writing to the Garde Impériale.'

He admitted his error, and thanked her warmly.

'Messieurs de la Garde Impériale!'

'Does not that,' she said, 'include the non-commissioned officers, the privates, and the cooks, of all the regiments?'

He could scarcely think that, but thought it provoking the French had no distinctive working title corresponding to gentlemen, and suggested 'Messieurs les Officiers': which might, Mrs. Culling assured him, comprise the barbers. He frowned, and she prescribed his writing, 'Messieurs les Colonels de la Garde Impériale.' This he set down. The point was that a stand must be made against the flood of sarcasms and bullyings to which the country was exposed in increasing degrees, under a belief that we would fight neither in the mass nor individually. Possibly, if it became known that the colonels refused to meet a midshipman, the gentlemen of our Household troops would advance a step.

Mrs. Culling's adroit efforts to weary him out of his project were unsuccessful. He was too much on fire to know the taste of absurdity.

Nevil repeated what he had written in French, and next the English of what he intended to say.

The lady conscientiously did her utmost to reconcile the two languages. She softened his downrightness, passed with approval his compliments to France and the ancient high reputation of her army, and, seeing that a loophole was left for them to apologize, asked how many French colonels he wanted to fight.

'I do not *want*, ma'am,' said Nevil.

He had simply taken up the glove they had again flung at our feet: and he had done it to stop the incessant revilings, little short of positive contempt, which we in

our indolence exposed ourselves to from the foreigner, particularly from Frenchmen, whom he liked; and precisely because he liked them he insisted on forcing them to respect us. Let his challenge be accepted, and he would find backers. He knew the stuff of Englishmen: they only required an example.

'French officers are skilful swordsmen,' said Mrs. Culling. 'My husband has told me they will spend hours of the day thrusting and parrying. They are used to duelling.'

'We,' Nevil answered, 'don't get apprenticed to the shambles to learn our duty on the field. Duelling is, I know, sickening folly. We go too far in pretending to despise every insult pitched at us. A man may do for his country what he wouldn't do for himself.'

Mrs. Culling gravely said she hoped that bloodshed would be avoided, and Mr. Beauchamp nodded.

She left him hard at work.

He was a popular boy, a favourite of women, and therefore full of engagements to Balls and dinners. And he was a modest boy, though his uncle encouraged him to deliver his opinions freely and argue with men. The little drummer attached to wheeling columns thinks not more of himself because his short legs perform the same strides as the grenadiers'; he is happy to be able to keep the step; and so was Nevil; and if ever he contradicted a senior, it was in the interests of the country. Veneration of heroes, living and dead, kept down his conceit. He worshipped devotedly. From an early age he exacted of his flattering ladies that they must love his hero. Not to love his hero was to be strangely in error, to be in need of conversion, and he proselytized with the ardour of the Moslem. His uncle Everard was proud of his good looks, fire, and nonsense, during the boy's extreme youth. He traced him by cousinships back to the great Earl Beauchamp

of Froissart, and would have it so; and he would have spoilt him had not the young fellow's mind been possessed by his reverence for men of deeds. How could he think of himself, who had done nothing, accomplished nothing, so long as he brooded on the images of signal Englishmen whose names were historic for daring, and the strong arm, and artfulness, all given to the service of the country?—men of a magnanimity overcast with simplicity, which Nevil held to be pure insular English; our type of splendid manhood, not discoverable elsewhere. A method of enraging him was to distinguish one or other of them as Irish, Scottish, or Cambrian. He considered it a dismemberment of the country. And notwithstanding the pleasure he had in uniting in his person the strong red blood of the chivalrous Lord Beauchamp with the hard and tenacious Romfrey blood, he hated the title of Norman. We are English—British, he said. A family resting its pride on mere ancestry provoked his contempt, if it did not show him one of his men. He had also a disposition to esteem lightly the family which, having produced a man, settled down after that effort for generations to enjoy the country's pay. Boys are unjust; but Nevil thought of the country mainly, arguing that we should not accept the country's money for what we do not ourselves perform. These traits of his were regarded as characteristics hopeful rather than the reverse; none of his friends and relatives foresaw danger in them. He was a capital boy for his elders to trot out and banter.

Mrs. Rosamund Culling usually went to his room to see him and doat on him before he started on his rounds of an evening. She suspected that his necessary attention to his toilet would barely have allowed him time to finish his copy of the letter. Certain phrases had bothered him. The thrice recurrence of 'ma patrie' jarred on his ear. 'Sentiments' afflicted his acute sense of the

declamatory twice. 'C'est avec les sentiments du plus profond regret': and again, 'Je suis bien sûr que vous comprendrez mes sentiments, et m'accorderez l'honneur que je réclame au nom de ma patrie outragée.' The word 'patrie' was broadcast over the letter, and 'honneur' appeared four times, and a more delicate word to harp on than the others!

'Not to Frenchmen,' said his friend Rosamund. 'I would put "Je suis convaincu": it is not so familiar.'

'But I have written out the fair copy, ma'am, and that alteration seems a trifle.'

'I would copy it again and again, Nevil, to get it right.'

'No: I'd rather see it off than have it right,' said Nevil, and he folded the letter.

How the deuce to address it, and what direction to write on it, were further difficulties. He had half a mind to remain at home to conquer them by excogitation.

Rosamund urged him not to break his engagement to dine at the Halketts', where perhaps from his friend Colonel Halkett, who would never imagine the reason for the inquiry, he might learn how a letter to a crack French regiment should be addressed and directed.

This proved persuasive, and as the hour was late Nevil had to act on her advice in a hurry.

His uncle Everard enjoyed a perusal of the manuscript in his absence.

CHAPTER II

UNCLE, NEPHEW, AND ANOTHER

The Honourable Everard Romfrey came of a race of fighting earls, toughest of men, whose high, stout, Western castle had weathered our cyclone periods of history

without changeing hands more than once, and then but for a short year or two, as if to teach the original possessors the wisdom of inclining to the stronger side. They had a queen's chamber in it, and a king's; and they stood well up against the charge of having dealt darkly with the king. He died among them—how has not been told. We will not discuss the conjectures here. A savour of North Sea foam and ballad pirates hangs about the early chronicles of the family. Indications of an ancestry that had lived between the wave and the cloud were discernible in their notions of right and wrong. But a settlement on solid earth has its influences. They were chivalrous knights bannerets, and leaders in the tented field, paying and taking fair ransom for captures; and they were good landlords, good masters blithely followed to the wars. Sing an old battle of Normandy, Picardy, Gascony, and you celebrate deeds of theirs. At home they were vexatious neighbours to a town of burghers claiming privileges: nor was it unreasonable that the Earl should flout the pretensions of the town to read things for themselves, documents, titleships, rights, and the rest. As well might the flat plain boast of seeing as far as the pillar. Earl and town fought the fight of Barons and Commons in epitome. The Earl gave way; the Barons gave way. Mighty men may thrash numbers for a time; in the end the numbers will be thrashed into the art of beating their teachers. It is bad policy to fight the odds inch by inch. Those primitive schoolmasters of the million liked it, and took their pleasure in that way. The Romfreys did not breed warriors for a parade at Court; wars, though frequent, were not constant, and they wanted occupation: they may even have felt that they were bound in no common degree to the pursuit of an answer to what may be called the parent question of humanity: Am I thy master, or thou

mine? They put it to lords of other castles, to town corporations, and sometimes brother to brother: and notwithstanding that the answer often unseated and once discastled them, they swam back to their places, as born warriors, urged by a passion for land, are almost sure to do; are indeed quite sure, so long as they multiply sturdily, and will never take no from Fortune. A family passion for land, that survives a generation, is as effective as genius in producing the object it conceives; and through marriages and conflicts, the seizure of lands, and brides bearing land, these sharp-feeding eagle-eyed earls of Romfrey spied few spots within their top tower's wide circle of the heavens not their own.

It is therefore manifest that they had the root qualities, the prime active elements, of men in perfection, and notably that appetite to flourish at the cost of the weaker, which is the blessed exemplification of strength, and has been man's cheerfulest encouragement to fight on since his comparative subjugation (on the whole, it seems complete) of the animal world. By-and-by the struggle is transferred to higher ground, and we begin to perceive how much we are indebted to the fighting spirit. Strength is the brute form of truth. No conspicuously great man was born of the Romfreys, who were better served by a succession of able sons. They sent undistinguished able men to army and navy—lieutenants given to be critics of their captains, but trustworthy for their work. In the later life of the family, they preferred the provincial state of splendid squires to Court and political honours. They were renowned shots, long-limbed stalking sportsmen in field and bower, fast friends, intemperate enemies, handsome to feminine eyes, resembling one another in build, and mostly of the Northern colour, or betwixt the tints, with an hereditary nose and mouth

that cried Romfrey from faces thrice diluted in cousinships.

The Hon. Everard (Stephen Denely Craven Romfrey), third son of the late Earl, had some hopes of the title, and was in person a noticeable gentleman, in mind a mediæval baron, in politics a crotchety unintelligible Whig. He inherited the estate of Holdesbury, on the borders of Hampshire and Wilts, and espoused that of Steynham in Sussex, where he generally resided. His favourite in the family had been the Lady Emily, his eldest sister, who, contrary to the advice of her other brothers and sisters, had yielded her hand to his not wealthy friend, Colonel Richard Beauchamp. After the death of Nevil's parents, he adopted the boy, being himself childless, and a widower. Childlessness was the affliction of the family. Everard, having no son, could hardly hope that his brother the Earl, and Craven, Lord Avonley, would have one, for he loved the prospect of the title. Yet, as there were no cousins of the male branch extant, the lack of an heir was a serious omission, and to become the Earl of Romfrey, and be the last Earl of Romfrey, was a melancholy thought, however brilliant. So sinks the sun: but he could not desire the end of a great day. At one time he was a hot Parliamentarian, calling himself a Whig, called by the Whigs a Radical, called by the Radicals a Tory, and very happy in fighting them all round. This was during the decay of his party, before the Liberals were defined. A Liberal deprived him of the seat he had held for fifteen years, and the clearness of his understanding was obscured by that black vision of popular ingratitude which afflicts the free fighting man yet more than the malleable public servant. The latter has a clerkly humility attached to him like a second nature, from his habit of doing as others bid him: the former

smacks a voluntarily sweating forehead and throbbing wounds for witness of his claim upon your palpable thankfulness. It is an insult to tell him that he fought for his own satisfaction. Mr. Romfrey still called himself a Whig, though it was Whig mean vengeance on account of his erratic vote and voice on two or three occasions that denied him a peerage and a seat in haven. Thither let your good sheep go, your echoes, your wag-tail dogs, your wealthy pursy manufacturers! He decried the attractions of the sublimer House, and laughed at the transparent Whiggery of his party in replenishing it from the upper shoots of the commonalty: 'Dragging it down to prop it up! swamping it to keep it swimming!' he said.

He was nevertheless a vehement supporter of that House. He stood for King, Lords, and Commons, in spite of his personal grievances, harping the triad as vigorously as bard of old Britain. Commons he added out of courtesy, or from usage or policy, or for emphasis, or for the sake of the Constitutional number of the Estates of the realm, or it was because he had an intuition of the folly of omitting them; the same, to some extent, that builders have regarding bricks when they plan a fabric. Thus, although King and Lords prove the existence of Commons in days of the political deluge almost syllogistically, the example of not including one of the Estates might be imitated, and Commons and King do not necessitate the conception of an intermediate third, while Lords and Commons suggest the decapitation of the leading figure. The united three, however, no longer cast reflections on one another, and were an assurance to this acute politician that his birds were safe. He preserved game rigorously, and the deduction was the work of instinct with him. To his mind the game-laws were the corner-stone of Law, and of a man's right to hold his

own; and so delicately did he think the country poised, that an attack on them threatened the structure of justice. The three conjoined Estates were therefore his head gamekeepers; their duty was to back him against the poacher, if they would not see the country tumble. As to his under-gamekeepers, he was their intimate and their friend, saying, with none of the misanthropy which proclaims the virtues of the faithful dog to the confusion of humankind, he liked their company better than that of his equals, and learnt more from them. They also listened deferentially to their instructor.

The conversation he delighted in most might have been going on in any century since the Conquest. Grant him his not unreasonable argument upon his property in game, he was a liberal landlord. No tenants were forced to take his farms. He dragged none by the collar. He gave them liberty to go to Australia, Canada, the Americas, if they liked. He asked in return to have the liberty to shoot on his own grounds, and rear the marks for his shot, treating the question of indemnification as a gentleman should. Still there were grumbling tenants. He swarmed with game, and, though he was liberal, his hares and his birds were immensely destructive: computation could not fix the damage done by them. Probably the farmers expected them not to eat. 'There are two parties to a bargain,' said Everard, 'and one gets the worst of it. But if he was never obliged to make it, where 's his right to complain?' Men of sense rarely obtain satisfactory answers: they are provoked to despise their kind. But the poacher was another kind of vermin than the stupid tenant. Everard did him the honour to hate him, and twice in a fray had he collared his ruffian, and subsequently sat in condemnation of the wretch: for he who can attest a villany is best qualified to punish it. Gangs from the metropolis found him too

determined and alert for their sport. It was the factiousness of here and there an unbroken young scoundrelly colt poacher of the neighbourhood, a born thief, a fellow damned in an inveterate taste for game, which gave him annoyance. One night he took Master Nevil out with him, and they hunted down a couple of sinners that showed fight against odds. Nevil attempted to beg them off because of their boldness. 'I don't set my traps for nothing,' said his uncle, silencing him. But the boy reflected that his uncle was perpetually lamenting the cowed spirit of the common English—formerly such fresh and merry men! He touched Rosamund Culling's heart with his description of their attitudes when they stood resisting and bawling to the keepers, 'Come on! we 'll die for it.' They did not die. Everard explained to the boy that he could have killed them, and was contented to have sent them to gaol for a few weeks. Nevil gaped at the empty magnanimity which his uncle presented to him as a remarkably big morsel. At the age of fourteen he was despatched to sea.

He went unwillingly; not so much from an objection to a naval life as from a wish, incomprehensible to grown men and boys, and especially to his cousin, Cecil Baskelett, that he might remain at school and learn. 'The fellow would like to be a parson!' Everard said in disgust. No parson had ever been known of in the Romfrey family, or in the Beauchamp. A legend of a parson that had been a tutor in one of the Romfrey houses, and had talked and sung blandly to a damsel of the blood—degenerate maid! —to receive a handsome trouncing for his pains, instead of the holy marriage-tie he aimed at, was the only connection of the Romfreys with the parsonry, as Everard called them. He attributed the boy's feeling to the influence of his great-aunt Beauchamp, who would, he said, infallibly have made a parson of him. 'I'd rather

enlist for a soldier,' Nevil said, and he ceased to dream of rebellion, and of his little property of a few thousand pounds in the funds to aid him in it. He confessed to his dear friend Rosamund Culling that he thought the parsons happy in having time to read history. And oh, to feel for certain *which* side was the wrong side in our Civil War, so that one should not hesitate in choosing! Such puzzles are never, he seemed to be aware, solved in a midshipman's mess. He hated bloodshed, and was guilty of the 'cotton-spinners' babble,' abhorred of Everard, in alluding to it. Rosamund liked him for his humanity; but she, too, feared he was a slack Romfrey when she heard him speak in precocious contempt of glory. Somewhere, somehow, he had got hold of Manchester sarcasms concerning glory: a weedy word of the newspapers had been sown in his bosom perhaps. He said: 'I don't care to win glory; I know all about that; I 've seen an old hat in the Louvre.' And he would have had her to suppose that he had looked on the campaigning head-cover of Napoleon simply as a shocking bad, bald, brown-rubbed old *tricorne* rather than as the nod of extinction to thousands, the great orb of darkness, the still-trembling gloomy quiver—the brain of the lightnings of battles.

Now this boy nursed no secret presumptuous belief that he was fitted for the walks of the higher intellect; he was not having his impudent boy's fling at superiority over the superior, as here and there a subtle-minded vain juvenile will; nor was he a parrot repeating a line from some Lancastrian pamphlet. He really disliked war and the sword; and scorning the prospect of an idle life, confessing that his abilities barely adapted him for a sailor's, he was opposed to the career opened to him almost to the extreme of shrinking and terror. Or that was the impression conveyed to a not unsympathetic

hearer by his forlorn efforts to make himself understood, which were like the tappings of the stick of a blind man mystified by his sense of touch at wrong corners. His bewilderment and speechlessness were a comic display, tragic to him.

Just as his uncle Everard predicted, he came home from his first voyage a pleasant sailor lad. His features, more than handsome to a woman, so mobile they were, shone of sea and spirit, the chance lights of the sea, and the spirit breathing out of it. As to war and bloodshed, a man's first thought must be his country, young Jacket remarked, and *Ich dien* was the best motto afloat. Rosamund noticed the peculiarity of the books he selected for his private reading. They were not boys' books, books of adventure and the like. His favourite author was one writing of Heroes, in (so she esteemed it) a style resembling either early architecture or utter dilapidation, so loose and rough it seemed; a wind-in-the-orchard style, that tumbled down here and there an appreciable fruit with uncouth bluster; sentences without commencements running to abrupt endings and smoke, like waves against a sea-wall, learned dictionary words giving a hand to street-slang, and accents falling on them haphazard, like slant rays from driving clouds; all the pages in a breeze, the whole book producing a kind of electrical agitation in the mind and the joints. This was its effect on the lady. To her the incomprehensible was the abominable, for she had our country's high critical feeling; but he, while admitting that he could not quite master it, liked it. He had dug the book out of a bookseller's shop in Malta, captivated by its title, and had, since the day of his purchase, gone at it again and again, getting nibbles of golden meaning by instalments, as with a solitary pick in a very dark mine, until the illumination of an idea struck him that there was a great deal

more in the book than there was in himself. This was sufficient to secure the devoted attachment of young Mr. Beauchamp. Rosamund sighed with apprehension to think of his unlikeness to boys and men among his countrymen in some things. Why should he hug a book he owned he could not quite comprehend? He said he liked a bone in his mouth; and it was natural wisdom, though unappreciated by women. A bone in a boy's mind for him to gnaw and worry, corrects the vagrancies and promotes the healthy activities, whether there be marrow in it or not. Supposing it furnishes only dramatic entertainment in that usually vacant tenement, or powder-shell, it will be of service.

Nevil proposed to her that her next present should be the entire list of his beloved Incomprehensible's published works, and she promised, and was not sorry to keep her promise dangling at the skirts of memory, to drop away in time. For that fire-and-smoke writer dedicated volumes to the praise of a regicide. Nice reading for her dear boy! Some weeks after Nevil was off again, she abused herself for her half-hearted love of him, and would have given him anything—the last word in favour of the Country versus the royal Martyr, for example, had he insisted on it. She gathered, bit by bit, that he had dashed at his big blustering cousin Cecil to vindicate her good name. The direful youths fought in the Steynham stables, overheard by the grooms. Everard received a fine account of the tussle from these latter, and Rosamund, knowing him to be of the order of gentlemen who, whatsoever their sins, will at all costs protect a woman's delicacy, and a dependant's, man or woman, did not fear to have her ears shocked in probing him on the subject.

Everard was led to say that Nevil's cousins were bedevilled with womanfolk.

From which Rosamund perceived that women had been at work; and if so, it was upon the business of the scandal-monger; and if so, Nevil fought his cousin to protect her good name from a babbler of the family gossip.

She spoke to Stukely Culbrett, her dead husband's friend, to whose recommendation she was indebted for her place in Everard Romfrey's household.

'Nevil behaved like a knight, I hear.'

'Your beauty was disputed,' said he, 'and Nevil knocked the blind man down for not being able to see.'

She thought, 'Not my beauty! Nevil struck his cousin on behalf of the only fair thing I have left to me!'

This was a moment with her when many sensations rush together and form a knot in sensitive natures. She had been very good-looking. She was good-looking still, but she remembered the bloom of her looks in her husband's days (the tragedy of the mirror is one for a woman to write: I am ashamed to find myself smiling while the poor lady weeps), she remembered his praises, her pride; his death in battle, her anguish: then, on her strange entry to this house, her bitter wish to be older; and then, the oppressive calm of her recognition of her wish's fulfilment the heavy drop to dead earth, when she could say, or pretend to think she could say—I look old enough: will they tattle of me now? Nevil's championship of her good name brought her history spinning about her head, and threw a finger of light on her real position. In that she saw the slenderness of her hold on respect, as well as felt her personal stainlessness. The boy warmed her chill widowhood. It was written that her second love should be of the pattern of mother's love. She loved him hungrily and jealously, always in fear for him when he was absent, even anxiously when she had him near. For some cause, born, one may fancy, of the

hour of her love's conception, his image in her heart was steeped in tears. She was not, happily, one of the women who betray strong feeling, and humour preserved her from excesses of sentiment.

CHAPTER III

CONTAINS BARONIAL VIEWS OF THE PRESENT TIME

Upon the word of honour of Rosamund, the letter to the officers of the French Guard was posted.

'Post it, post it,' Everard said, on her consulting him, with the letter in her hand. 'Let the fellow stand his luck.' It was addressed to the Colonel of the First Regiment of the Imperial Guard, Paris. That superscription had been suggested by Colonel Halkett. Rosamund was in favour of addressing it to Versailles, Nevil to the Tuileries; but Paris could hardly fail to hit the mark, and Nevil waited for the reply, half expecting an appointment on the French sands: for the act of posting a letter, though it be to little short of the Pleiades even, will stamp an incredible proceeding as a matter of business, so ready is the ardent mind to take footing on the last thing done. The flight of Mr. Beauchamp's letter placed it in the common order of occurrences for the youthful author of it. Jack Wilmore, a messmate, offered to second him, though he should be dismissed the service for it. Another second would easily be found somewhere; for, as Nevil observed, you have only to set these affairs going, and British blood rises: we are not the people you see on the surface. Wilmore's father was a parson, for instance. What did he do? He could not help himself: he supplied the army and navy with

recruits! One son was in a marching regiment, the other was Jack, and three girls had vowed never to quit the rectory save as brides of officers. Nevil thought that seemed encouraging; we were evidently not a nation of shopkeepers at heart; and he quoted sayings of Mr. Stukely Culbrett's, in which neither his ear nor Wilmore's detected the under-ring Stukely was famous for: as that England had saddled herself with India for the express purpose of better obeying the Commandments in Europe; and that it would be a lamentable thing for the Continent and our doctrines if ever beef should fail the Briton, and such like. 'Depend upon it we 're a fighting nation naturally, Jack,' said Nevil. 'How can we submit! . . . however, I shall not be impatient. I dislike duelling, and hate war, but I will have the country respected.' They planned a defence of the country, drawing their strategy from magazine articles by military pens, reverberations of the extinct voices of the daily and weekly journals, customary after a panic, and making bloody stands on spots of extreme pastoral beauty, which they visited by coach and rail, looking back on unfortified London with particular melancholy.

Rosamund's word may be trusted that she dropped the letter into a London post-office in pursuance of her promise to Nevil. The singular fact was that no answer to it ever arrived. Nevil, without a doubt of her honesty, proposed an expedition to Paris; he was ordered to join his ship, and he lay moored across the water in the port of Bevisham, panting for notice to be taken of him. The slight of the total disregard of his letter now affected him personally; it took him some time to get over this indignity put upon him, especially because of his being under the impression that the country suffered, not he at all. The letter had served its object: ever since the transmission of it the menaces and insults had ceased.

But they might be renewed, and he desired to stop them altogether. His last feeling was one of genuine regret that Frenchmen should have behaved unworthily of the high estimation he held them in. With which he dismissed the affair.

He was rallied about it when he next sat at his uncle's table, and had to pardon Rosamund for telling.

Nevil replied modestly: 'I dare say you think me half a fool, sir. All I know is, I waited for my betters to speak first. I have no dislike of Frenchmen.'

Everard shook his head to signify, 'not *half*.' But he was gentle enough in his observations. 'There 's a motto, Ex pede Herculem. You stepped out for the dogs to judge better of us. It 's an infernally tripping motto for a composite structure like the kingdom of Great Britain and Manchester, boy Nevil. We can fight foreigners when the time comes.' He directed Nevil to look home, and cast an eye on the cotton-spinners, with the remark that they were binding us hand and foot to sell us to the biggest buyer, and were not Englishmen but 'Germans and Jews, and quakers and hybrids, diligent clerks and speculators, and commercial travellers, who have raised a fortune from foisting drugged goods on an idiot population.'

He loathed them for the curse they were to the country. And *he* was one of the few who spoke out. The fashion was to pet them. We stood against them; were half-hearted, and were beaten; and then we petted them, and bit by bit our privileges were torn away. We made lords of them to catch them, and they grocers of us by way of a return. 'Already,' said Everard, 'they have knocked the nation's head off, and dry-rotted the bone of the people.'

'Don't they,' Nevil asked, 'belong to the Liberal party?'

'I 'll tell you,' Everard replied, 'they belong to any party that upsets the party above them. They belong to the GEORGE FOXE party, and my poultry-roosts are the mark they aim at. You shall have a glance at the manufacturing district some day. You shall see the machines they work with. You shall see the miserable lank-jawed half-stewed pantaloons they 've managed to make of Englishmen there. My blood 's past boiling. They work young children in their factories from morning to night. Their manufactories are spreading like the webs of the devil to suck the blood of the country. In that district of theirs an epidemic levels men like a disease in sheep. Skeletons can't make a stand. On the top of it all they sing Sunday tunes!'

This behaviour of corn-law agitators and protectors of poachers was an hypocrisy too horrible for comment. Everard sipped claret. Nevil lashed his head for the clear idea which objurgation insists upon implanting, but batters to pieces in the act.

'Manchester 's the belly of this country!' Everard continued. 'So long as Manchester flourishes, we 're a country governed and led by the belly. The head and the legs of the country are sound still; I don't guarantee it for long, but the middle 's rapacious and corrupt. Take it on a question of foreign affairs, it 's an alderman after a feast. Bring it upon home politics, you meet a wolf.'

The faithful Whig veteran spoke with jolly admiration of the speech of a famous Tory chief.

'That was the way to talk to them! Denounce them traitors! Up whip, and set the ruffians capering! Hit them facers! Our men are always for the too-clever trick. They pluck the sprouts and eat them, as if the loss of a sprout or two thinned Manchester! Your policy of absorption is good enough when you 're dealing

with fragments. It 's a devilish unlucky thing to attempt with a concrete mass. You might as well ask your head to absorb a wall by running at it like a pugnacious nigger. I don't want you to go into Parliament ever. You 're a fitter man out of it; but if ever you 're bitten—and it 's the curse of our country to have politics as well as the other diseases—don't follow a flag, be independent, keep a free vote; remember how I 've been tied, and hold foot against Manchester. Do it blindfold; you don't want counselling, you 're sure to be right. I 'll lay you a blood-brood mare to a cabstand skeleton, you 'll have an easy conscience and deserve the thanks of the country.'

Nevil listened gravely. The soundness of the head and legs of the country he took for granted. The inflated state of the unchivalrous middle, denominated Manchester, terrified him. Could it be true that England was betraying signs of decay? and signs how ignoble! Half-a-dozen crescent lines cunningly turned, sketched her figure before the world, and the reflection for one ready to die upholding her was that the portrait was no caricature. Such an emblematic presentation of the land of his filial affection haunted him with hideous mockeries. Surely the foreigner hearing our boasts of her must compare us to showmen bawling the attractions of a Fat Lady at a fair!

Swoln Manchester bore the blame of it. Everard exulted to hear his young echo attack the cotton-spinners. But Nevil was for a plan, a system, immediate action; the descending among the people, and taking an initiative, LEADING them, insisting on their following, not standing aloof and shrugging.

'We lead them in war,' said he; 'why not in peace? There 's a front for peace as well as war, and that 's our place rightly. We 're pushed aside; why, it seems to

me we're treated like old-fashioned ornaments! The fault must be ours. Shrugging and sneering is about as honourable as blazing fireworks over your own defeat. Back we have to go! that's the point, sir. And as for jeering the cotton-spinners, I can't while they've the lead of us. We let them have it! And we have thrice the stake in the country. I don't mean properties and titles.'

'Deuce you don't,' said his uncle.

'I mean our names, our histories; I mean our duties. As for titles, the way to defend them is to be worthy of them.'

'Damned fine speech,' remarked Everard. 'Now you get out of that trick of prize-orationing. I call it snuffery, sir; it's all to your own nose! You're talking to me, not to a gallery. "Worthy of them!" Cæsar wraps his head in his robe: he gets his dig in the ribs for all his attitudinizing. It's very well for a man to talk like that who owns no more than his bare-bodkin life, poor devil. Tall talk's his jewelry: he must have his dandification in bunkum. You ought to know better. Property and titles are worth having, whether you are "worthy of them" or a disgrace to your class. The best way of defending them is to keep a strong fist, and take care you don't draw your fore-foot back more than enough.'

'Please propose something to be done,' said Nevil, depressed by the recommendation of that attitude.

Everard proposed a fight for every privilege his class possessed. 'They say,' he said, 'a nobleman fighting the odds is a sight for the gods: and I wouldn't yield an inch of ground. It's no use calling things by fine names —the country's ruined by cowardice. Poursuivez! I cry. Haro! at them! The biggest heart wins in the end. I haven't a doubt about that. And I haven't a doubt we carry the tonnage.'

'There 's the people,' sighed Nevil, entangled in his uncle's haziness.

'What people?'

'I suppose the people of Great Britain count, sir.'

'Of course they do; when the battle 's done, the fight lost and won.'

'Do you expect the people to look on, sir?'

'The people always wait for the winner, boy Nevil.'

The young fellow exclaimed despondingly, 'If it were a race!'

'It 's like a race, and we 're confoundedly out of training,' said Everard.

There he rested. A mediæval gentleman with the docile notions of the twelfth century, complacently driving them to grass and wattling them in the nineteenth, could be of no use to a boy trying to think, though he could set the youngster galloping. Nevil wandered about the woods of Steynham, disinclined to shoot and lend a hand to country sports. The popping of the guns of his uncle and guests hung about his ears much like their speech, which was unobjectionable in itself, but not sufficient; a little hard, he thought, a little idle. He wanted something, and wanted them to give their time and energy to something, that was not to be had in a market. The nobles, he felt sure, might resume their natural alliance with the people, and lead them, as they did of old, to the battle-field. How might they? A comely Sussex lass could not well tell him how. Sarcastic reports of the troublesome questioner represented him applying to a nymph of the country for enlightenment. He thrilled surprisingly under the charm of feminine beauty. 'The fellow 's sound at bottom,' his uncle said, hearing of his having really been seen walking in the complete form proper to his budding age, that is, in two halves. Nevil showed that he had gained an acquaintance

with the struggles of the neighbouring agricultural poor to live and rear their children. His uncle's table roared at his enumeration of the sickly little beings, consumptive or bandy-legged, within a radius of five miles of Steynham. Action was what he wanted, Everard said. Nevil perhaps thought the same, for he dashed out of his mooning with a wave of the Tory standard, delighting the ladies, though in that conflict of the Lion and the Unicorn (which was a Tory song) he seemed rather to wish to goad the dear lion than crush the one-horned intrusive upstart. His calling on the crack corps of Peers to enrol themselves forthwith in the front ranks, and to anticipate opposition by initiating measures, and so cut out that funny old crazy old galleon, the People, from under the batteries of the enemy, highly amused the gentlemen.

Before rejoining his ship, Nevil paid his customary short visit of ceremony to his great-aunt Beauchamp—a venerable lady past eighty, hitherto divided from him in sympathy by her dislike of his uncle Everard, who had once been his living hero. That was when he was in frocks, and still the tenacious fellow could not bear to hear his uncle spoken ill of.

'All the men of that family are heartless, and he is a man of wood, my dear, and a bad man,' the old lady said. 'He should have kept you at school, and sent you to college. You want reading and teaching and talking to. Such a house as that is should never be a home for you.' She hinted at Rosamund. Nevil defended the persecuted woman, but with no better success than from the attacks of the Romfrey ladies; with this difference, however, that these decried the woman's vicious arts, and Mistress Elizabeth Mary Beauchamp put all the sin upon the man. Such a man! she said. 'Let me hear that he has married her, I will not utter another word.' Nevil echoed, 'Married!' in a different key.

'I am as much of an aristocrat as any of you, only I rank morality higher,' said Mrs. Beauchamp. 'When you were a child I offered to take you and make you my heir, and *I* would have educated you. You shall see a great-nephew of mine that I did educate; he is eating his dinners for the bar in London, and comes to me every Sunday. I shall marry him to a good girl, and I shall show your uncle what my kind of man-making is.'

Nevil had no desire to meet the other great-nephew, especially when he was aware of the extraordinary circumstance that a Beauchamp great-niece, having no money, had bestowed her hand on a Manchester man defunct, whereof this young Blackburn Tuckham, the lawyer, was issue. He took his leave of Mrs. Elizabeth Beauchamp, respecting her for her constitutional health and brightness, and regretting for the sake of the country that she had not married to give England men and women resembling her. On the whole he considered her wiser in her prescription for the malady besetting him than his uncle. He knew that action was but a temporary remedy. College would have been his chronic medicine, and the old lady's acuteness in seeing it impressed him forcibly. She had given him a peaceable two days on the Upper Thames, in an atmosphere of plain good sense and just-mindedness. He wrote to thank her, saying: 'My England at sea will be your parlour-window looking down the grass to the river and rushes; and when you do me the honour to write, please tell me the names of those wild-flowers growing along the banks in Summer.' The old lady replied immediately, enclosing a cheque for fifty pounds: 'Colonel Halkett informs me you are under a cloud at Steynham, and I have thought you may be in want of pocket-money. The wild-flowers are willow-herb, meadow-sweet, and loosestrife. I shall be glad when you are here in Summer to see them.'

Nevil despatched the following: 'I thank you, but I shall not cash the cheque. The Steynham tale is this: I happened to be out at night, and stopped the keepers in chase of a young fellow trespassing. I caught him myself, but recognized him as one of a family I take an interest in, and let him run before they came up. My uncle heard a gun; I sent the head gamekeeper word in the morning to out with it all. Uncle E. was annoyed, and we had a rough parting. If you are rewarding me for this, I have no right to it.'

Mrs. Beauchamp rejoined: 'Your profession should teach you subordination, if it does nothing else that is valuable to a Christian gentleman. You will receive from the publisher the "Life and Letters of Lord Collingwood," whom I have it in my mind that a young midshipman should task himself to imitate. Spend the money as you think fit.'

Nevil's ship, commanded by Captain Robert Hall (a most gallant officer, one of his heroes, and of Lancashire origin, strangely!), flew to the South American station, in and about Lord Cochrane's waters; then as swiftly back. For, like the frail Norwegian bark on the edge of the maelström, liker to a country of conflicting interests and passions, that is not mentally on a level with its good fortune, England was drifting into foreign complications. A paralyzed Minister proclaimed it. The governing people, which is looked to for direction in grave dilemmas by its representatives and reflectors, shouted that it had been accused of pusillanimity. No one had any desire for war, only we really had (and it was perfectly true) been talking gigantic nonsense of peace, and of the everlastingness of the exchange of fruits for money, with angels waving raw-groceries of Eden in joy of the commercial picture. Therefore, to correct the excesses of that fit, we held the standing by the Moslem, on behalf

of the Mediterranean (and the Moslem is one of our customers, bearing an excellent reputation for the payment of debts), to be good, granting the necessity. We deplored the necessity. The Press wept over it. That, however, was not the politic tone for us while the Imperial berg of Polar ice watched us keenly; and the Press proceeded to remind us that we had once been bull-dogs. Was there not an animal within us having a right to a turn now and then? And was it not (Falstaff, on a calm world, was quoted) for the benefit of our constitutions now and then to loosen the animal? Granting the necessity, of course. By dint of incessantly speaking of the necessity we granted it unknowingly. The lighter hearts regarded our period of monotonously lyrical prosperity as a man sensible of fresh morning air looks back on the snoring bolster. Many of the graver were glad of a change. After all that maundering over the blessed peace which brings the raisin and the currant for the pudding, and shuts up the cannon with a sheep's head, it became a principle of popular taste to descant on the vivifying virtues of war; even as, after ten months of money-mongering in smoky London, the citizen hails the sea-breeze and an immersion in unruly brine, despite the cost, that breeze and brine may make a man of him, according to the doctor's prescription: sweet is home, but health is sweeter! Then was there another curious exhibition of us. Gentlemen, to the exact number of the Graces, dressed in drab of an ancient cut, made a pilgrimage to the icy despot, and besought him to give way for Piety's sake. He, courteous, colossal, and immoveable, waved them homeward. They returned and were hooted for belying the bellicose by their mission, and interpreting too well the peaceful. They were the unparalyzed Ministers of the occasion, but helpless.

And now came war, the purifier and the pestilence.

The cry of the English people for war was pretty general, as far as the criers went. They put on their Sabbath face concerning the declaration of war, and told with approval how the Royal hand had trembled in committing itself to the form of signature to which its action is limited. If there was money to be paid, there was a bugbear to be slain for it; and a bugbear is as obnoxious to the repose of commercial communities as rivals are to kings.

The cry for war was absolutely unanimous, and a supremely national cry, Everard Romfrey said, for it excluded the cotton-spinners.

He smacked his hands, crowing at the vociferations of disgust of those negrophiles and sweaters of Christians, whose isolated clamour amid the popular uproar sounded of gagged mouths.

One of the half-stifled cotton-spinners, a notorious one, a spouter of rank sedition and hater of aristocracy, a political poacher, managed to make himself heard. He was tossed to the Press for a morsel, and tossed back to the people in strips. Everard had a sharp return of appetite in reading the daily and weekly journals. They printed logic, they printed sense; they abused the treasonable barking cur unmercifully. They printed almost as much as he would have uttered, excepting the strong salt of his similes, likening that rascal and his crew to the American weed in our waters, to the rotting wild bees' nest in our trees, to the worm in our ships' timbers, and to lamentable afflictions of the human frame, and of sheep, oxen, honest hounds. Manchester was in eclipse. The world of England discovered that the peace-party which opposed was the actual cause of the war: never was indication clearer. But my business is with Mr. Beauchamp, to know whom, and partly understand

his conduct in after-days, it will be as well to take a bird's-eye glance at him through the war.

'Now,' said Everard, 'we shall see what stuff there is in that fellow Nevil.'

He expected, as you may imagine, a true young Beauchamp-Romfrey to be straining his collar like a leash-hound.

CHAPTER IV

A GLIMPSE OF NEVIL IN ACTION

The young gentleman to whom Everard Romfrey transferred his combative spirit despatched a letter from the Dardanelles, requesting his uncle not to ask him for a spark of enthusiasm. He despised our Moslem allies, he said, and thought with pity of the miserable herds of men in regiments marching across the steppes at the bidding of a despot that we were helping to popularize. He certainly wrote in the tone of a jejune politician; pardonable stuff to seniors entertaining similar opinions, but most exasperating when it runs counter to them: though one question put by Nevil was not easily answerable. He wished to know whether the English people would be so anxious to be at it if their man stood on the opposite shore and talked of trying conclusions on their green fields. And he suggested that they had become so ready for war because of their having grown rather ashamed of themselves, and for the special reason that they could have it at a distance.

'The rascal's liver 's out of order,' Everard said.

Coming to the sentence:—'Who speaks out in this crisis? There is one, and I am with him'; Mr. Romfrey's compassionate sentiments veered round to

irate amazement. For the person alluded to was indeed the infamous miauling cotton-spinner. Nevil admired him. He said so bluntly. He pointed to that traitorous George-Foxite as the one heroical Englishman of his day, declaring that he felt bound in honour to make known his admiration for the man; and he hoped his uncle would excuse him. 'If we differ, I am sorry, sir; but I should be a coward to withhold what I think of him when he has all England against him, and he is in the right, as England will discover. I maintain he speaks wisely—I don't mind saying, like a prophet; and he speaks on behalf of the poor as well as of the country. He appears to me the only public man who looks to the state of the poor—I mean, their interests. They pay for war, and if we are to have peace at home and strength for a really national war, the only war we can ever call necessary, the poor must be contented. He sees that. I shall not run the risk of angering you by writing to defend him, unless I hear of his being shamefully mishandled, and the bearer of an old name can be of service to him. I cannot say less, and will say no more.'

Everard apostrophized his absent nephew: 'You jackass!'

I am reminded by Mr. Romfrey's profound disappointment in the youth, that it will be repeatedly shared by many others: and I am bound to forewarn readers of this history that there is no plot in it. The hero is chargeable with the official disqualification of constantly offending prejudices, never seeking to please; and all the while it is upon him the narrative hangs. To be a public favourite is his last thought. Beauchampism, as one confronting him calls it, may be said to stand for nearly everything which is the obverse of Byronism, and rarely woos your sympathy, shuns the statuesque pathetic,

or any kind of posturing. For Beauchamp will not even look at happiness to mourn its absence; melodious lamentations, demoniacal scorn, are quite alien to him. His faith is in working and fighting. With every inducement to offer himself for a romantic figure, he despises the pomades and curling-irons of modern romance, its shears and its labels: in fine, every one of those positive things by whose aid, and by some adroit flourishing of them, the nimbus known as a mysterious halo is produced about a gentleman's head. And a highly alluring adornment it is! We are all given to lose our solidity and fly at it; although the faithful mirror of fiction has been showing us latterly that a too superhuman beauty has disturbed popular belief in the bare beginnings of the existence of heroes: but this, very likely, is nothing more than a fit of Republicanism in the nursery, and a deposition of the leading doll for lack of variety in him. That conqueror of circumstances will, the dullest soul may begin predicting, return on his cockhorse to favour and authority. Meantime the exhibition of a hero whom circumstances overcome, and who does not weep or ask you for a tear, who continually forfeits attractiveness by declining to better his own fortunes, must run the chances of a novelty during the interregnum. Nursery Legitimists will be against him to a man; Republicans likewise, after a queer sniff at his pretensions, it is to be feared. For me, I have so little command over him, that in spite of my nursery tastes, he drags me whither he lists. It is artless art and monstrous innovation to present so wilful a figure, but were I to create a striking fable for him, and set him off with scenic effects and contrasts, it would be only a momentary tonic to you, to him instant death. He could not live in such an atmosphere. The simple truth has to be told: how he loved his country, and for another and a broader love,

growing out of his first passion, fought it; and being small by comparison, and finding no giant of the Philistines disposed to receive a stone in his fore-skull, pummelled the obmutescent mass, to the confusion of a conceivable epic. His indifferent England refused it to him. That is all I can say. The greater power of the two, she seems, with a quiet derision that does not belie her amiable passivity, to have reduced in Beauchamp's career the boldest readiness for public action, and some good stout efforts besides, to the flat result of an optically discernible influence of our hero's character in the domestic circle; perhaps a faintly-outlined circle or two beyond it. But this does not forbid him to be ranked as one of the most distinguishing of her children of the day he lived in. Blame the victrix if you think he should have been livelier.

Nevil soon had to turn his telescope from politics. The torch of war was actually lighting, and he was not fashioned to be heedless of what surrounded him. Our diplomacy, after dancing with all the suppleness of stilts, gravely resigned the gift of motion. Our dauntless Lancastrian thundered like a tempest over a gambling tent, disregarded. Our worthy people, consenting to the doctrine that war is a scourge, contracted the habit of thinking it, in this case, the dire necessity which is the sole excuse for giving way to an irritated pugnacity, and sucked the comforting caramel of an alliance with their troublesome next-door neighbour, profuse in comfits as in scorpions. Nevil detected that politic element of their promptitude for war. His recollections of dissatisfaction in former days assisted him to perceive the nature of it, but he was too young to hold his own against the hubbub of a noisy people, much too young to remain sceptical of a modern people's enthusiasm for war while journals

were testifying to it down the length of their columns, and letters from home palpitated with it, and shipmates yawned wearily for the signal, and shiploads of red coats and blue, infantry, cavalry, artillery, were singing farewell to the girl at home, and hurrah for anything in foreign waters. He joined the stream with a cordial spirit. Since it must be so! The wind of that haughty proceeding of the Great Bear in putting a paw over the neutral brook brushed his cheek unpleasantly. He clapped hands for the fezzy defenders of the border fortress, and when the order came for the fleet to enter the old romantic sea of storms and fables, he wrote home a letter fit for his uncle Everard to read. Then there was the sailing and the landing, and the march up the heights, which Nevil was condemned to look at. To his joy he obtained an appointment on shore, and after that Everard heard of him from other channels. The two were of a mind when the savage winter advanced which froze the attack of the city, and might be imaged as the hoar god of hostile elements pointing a hand to the line reached, and menacing at one farther step. Both blamed the Government, but they divided as to the origin of governmental inefficiency; Nevil accusing the Lords guilty of foulest sloth, Everard the Quakers of dry-rotting the country. He passed with a shrug Nevil's puling outcry for the enemy as well as our own poor fellows: 'At his steppes again!' And he had to be forgiving when reports came of his nephew's turn for overdoing his duty: 'show-fighting,' as he termed it.

'Braggadocioing in deeds is only next bad to mouthing it,' he wrote very rationally. 'Stick to your line. Don't go out of it till you are ordered out. Remember that we want *soldiers* and *sailors*, we don't want *suicides*.' He condescended to these italics, considering impressiveness to be urgent. In his heart, notwithstanding his implacably

clear judgement, he was passably well pleased with the congratulations encompassing him on account of his nephew's gallantry at a period of dejection in Britain: for the winter was dreadful; every kind heart that went to bed with cold feet felt acutely for our soldiers on the frozen heights, and thoughts of heroes were as good as warming-pans. Heroes we would have. It happens in war as in wit, that all the birds of wonder fly to a flaring reputation. He that has done one wild thing must necessarily have done the other; so Nevil found himself standing in the thick of a fame that blew rank eulogies on him for acts he had not performed. The Earl of Romfrey forwarded hampers and a letter of praise. 'They tell me that while you were facing the enemy, temporarily attaching yourself to one of the regiments—I forget which, though I have heard it named —you sprang out under fire on an eagle clawing a hare. I like that. I hope you had the benefit of the hare. She is our property, and I have issued an injunction that she shall not go into the newspapers.' Everard was entirely of a contrary opinion concerning the episode of eagle and hare, though it was a case of a bird of prey interfering with an object of the chase. Nevil wrote home most entreatingly and imperatively, like one wincing, begging him to contradict that and certain other stories, and prescribing the form of a public renunciation of his proclaimed part in them. 'The hare,' he sent word, 'is the property of young Michell of the Rodney, and he is the humanest and the gallantest fellow in the service. I have written to my Lord. Pray help to rid me of burdens that make me feel like a robber and impostor.'

Everard replied:

'I have a letter from your captain, informing me that I am unlikely to see you home unless you learn to hold yourself in. I wish you were in another battery than Robert

Hall's. He forgets the force of example, however much of a dab he may be at precept. But there you are, and please clap a hundredweight on your appetite for figuring, will you. Do you think there is any good in helping to Frenchify our army? I loathe a fellow who shoots at a medal. I wager he is easy enough to be caught by circumvention—put me in the open with him. Tom Biggot, the boxer, went over to Paris, and stood in the ring with one of their dancing pugilists, and the first round he got a crack on the chin from the rogue's foot; the second round he caught him by the lifted leg, and punished him till pec was all he could say of peccavi. Fight the straightforward fight. Hang élan! Battle is a game of give and take, and if our men get élanned, we shall see them refusing to come up to time. This new crossing and medalling is the devil's own notion for upsetting a solid British line, and tempting fellows to get invalided that they may blaze it before the shopkeepers and their wives in the city. Give us an army!—none of your caperers. Here are lots of circusy heroes coming home to rest after their fatigues. One was spouting at a public dinner yesterday night. He went into it upright, and he ran out of it upright—at the head of his men! —and here he is feasted by the citizens and making a speech upright, and my boy fronting the enemy!'

Everard's involuntary break-down from his veteran's roughness to a touch of feeling thrilled Nevil, who began to perceive what his uncle was driving at when he rebuked the coxcombry of the field, and spoke of the description of compliment your hero was paying Englishmen in affecting to give them examples of bravery and preternatural coolness. Nevil sent home humble confessions of guilt in this respect, with fresh praises of young Michell: for though Everard, as Nevil recognized it, was perfectly right in the abstract, and generally right, there are times

when an example is needed by brave men—times when the fiery furnace of death's dragon-jaw is not inviting even to Englishmen receiving the word that duty bids them advance, and they require a leader of the way. A national coxcombry that pretends to an independence of human sensations, and makes a motto of our dandiacal courage, is more perilous to the armies of the nation than that of a few heroes. It is this coxcombry which has too often caused disdain of the wise chief's maxim of calculation for winners, namely, to have always the odds on your side, and which has bled, shattered, and occasionally disgraced us. Young Michell's carrying powder-bags to the assault, and when ordered to retire, bearing them on his back, and helping a wounded soldier on the way, did surely well; nor did Mr. Beauchamp himself behave so badly on an occasion when the sailors of his battery caught him out of a fire of shell that raised jets of dust and smoke like a range of geysers over the open, and hugged him as loving women do at a meeting or a parting. He was penitent before his uncle, admitting, first, that the men were not in want of an example of the contempt of death, and secondly, that he doubted whether it was contempt of death on his part so much as pride—a hatred of being seen running.

'I don't like the fellow to be drawing it so fine,' said Everard. It sounded to him a trifle parsonical. But his heart was won by Nevil's determination to wear out the campaign rather than be invalided or entrusted with a holiday duty.

'I see with shame (admiration of *them*) old infantry captains and colonels of no position beyond their rank in the army, sticking to their post,' said Nevil, 'and a lord and a lord and a lord slipping off as though the stuff of the man in him had melted. I shall go through with it.' Everard approved him.

Colonel Halkett wrote that the youth was a skeleton. Still Everard encouraged him to persevere, and said of him:

'I like him for holding to his work *after* the strain's over. That tells the man.'

He observed at his table, in reply to commendations of his nephew:

'Nevil's leak is his political craze, and that seems to be going: I hope it is. You can't rear a man on politics. When I was of his age I never looked at the newspapers, except to read the divorce cases. I came to politics with a ripe judgement. He shines in action, and he 'll find that out, and leave others the palavering.'

It was upon the close of the war that Nevil drove his uncle to avow a downright undisguised indignation with him. He caught a fever in the French camp, where he was dispensing vivers and provends out of English hampers.

'Those French fellows are every man of them trained up to snapping-point,' said Everard. 'You 're sure to have them if you hold out long against them. And greedy dogs too: they 're for half our hampers, and all the glory. And there's Nevil down on his back in the thick of them! Will anybody tell me why the devil he must be poking into the French camp? They were ready enough to run to him and beg potatoes. It 's all for humanity he does it—mark that. Never was a word fitter for a quack's mouth than "humanity." Two syllables more, and the parsons would be riding it to sawdust. Humanity! Humanitomtity! It 's the best word of the two for half the things done in the name of it.'

A tremendously bracing epistle, excellent for an access of fever, was despatched to humanity's curate, and Everard sat expecting a hot rejoinder, or else a black sealed letter, but neither one nor the other arrived.

Suddenly, to his disgust, came rumours of peace between the mighty belligerents.

The silver trumpets of peace were nowhere hearkened to with satisfaction by the bull-dogs, though triumph rang sonorously through the music, for they had been severely mangled, as usual at the outset, and they had at last got their grip, and were in high condition for fighting.

The most expansive panegyrists of our deeds did not dare affirm of the most famous of them, that England had embarked her costly cavalry to offer it for a mark of artillery-balls on three sides of a square: and the belief was universal that we could do more business-like deeds and play the great game of blunders with an ability refined by experience. Everard Romfrey was one of those who thought themselves justified in insisting upon the continuation of the war, in contempt of our allies. His favourite saying that constitution beats the world, was being splendidly manifested by our bearing. He was very uneasy; he would not hear of peace; and not only that, the imperial gentleman soberly committed the naïveté of sending word to Nevil to let him know immediately the opinion of the camp concerning it, as perchance an old Roman knight may have written to some young aquilifer of the Prætorians.

Allies, however, are of the description of twins joined by a membrane, and supposing that one of them determines to sit down, the other will act wisely in bending his knees at once, and doing the same: he cannot but be extremely uncomfortable left standing. Besides, there was the Ottoman cleverly poised again; the Muscovite was battered; fresh guilt was added to the military glory of the Gaul. English grumblers might well be asked what they had fought for, if they were not contented.

Colonel Halkett mentioned a report that Nevil had received a slight thigh-wound of small importance. At

any rate, something was the matter with him, and it was naturally imagined that he would have double cause to write home; and still more so for the reason, his uncle confessed, that he had foreseen the folly of a war conducted by milky cotton-spinners and their adjuncts, in partnership with a throned gambler, who had won his stake, and now snapped his fingers at them. Everard expected, he had prepared himself for, the young naval politician's crow, and he meant to admit frankly that he had been wrong in wishing to fight anybody without having first crushed the cotton faction. But Nevil continued silent.

'Dead in hospital or a Turk hotel!' sighed Everard; 'and no more to the scoundrels over there than a body to be shovelled into slack lime.'

Rosamund Culling was the only witness of his remarkable betrayal of grief.

CHAPTER V

RENÉE

At last, one morning, arrived a letter from a French gentleman signing himself Comte Cresnes de Croisnel, in which Everard was informed that his nephew had accompanied the son of the writer, Captain de Croisnel, on board an Austrian boat out of the East, and was lying in Venice under a return-attack of fever,—not, the count stated pointedly, in the hands of an Italian physician. He had brought his own with him to meet his son, who was likewise disabled.

Everard was assured by M. de Croisnel that every attention and affectionate care were being rendered to his gallant and adored nephew—'vrai type de tout ce

qu'il y a de noble et de chevaleresque dans la vieille Angleterre'—from a family bound to him by the tenderest obligations, personal and national; one as dear to every member of it as the brother, the son, they welcomed with thankful hearts to the Divine interposition restoring him to them. In conclusion, the count proposed something like the embrace of a fraternal friendship should Everard think fit to act upon the spontaneous sentiments of a loving relative, and join them in Venice to watch over his nephew's recovery. Already M. Nevil was stronger. The gondola was a medicine in itself, the count said.

Everard knitted his mouth to intensify a peculiar subdued form of laughter through the nose, in hopeless ridicule of a Frenchman's notions of an Englishman's occupations—presumed across Channel to allow of his breaking loose from shooting engagements at a minute's notice, to rush off to a fetid foreign city notorious for mud and mosquitoes, and commence capering and grimacing, pouring forth a jugful of ready-made extravagances, with *mon fils! mon cher neveu! Dieu!* and similar fiddle-dedee. These were matters for women to do, if they chose: women and Frenchmen were much of a pattern. Moreover, he knew the hotel this Comte de Croisnel was staying at. He gasped at the name of it: he had rather encounter a grisly bear than a mosquito any night of his life, for no stretch of cunning outwits a mosquito; and enlarging on the qualities of the terrific insect, he vowed it was damnation without trial or judgement.

Eventually, Mrs. Culling's departure was permitted. He argued, 'Why go? the fellow's comfortable, getting himself together, and you say the French are good nurses.' But her entreaties to go were vehement, though Venice had no happy place in her recollections, and he withheld his objections to her going. For him, the fields forbade

it. He sent hearty messages to Nevil, and that was enough, considering that the young dog of 'humanity' had clearly been running out of his way to catch a jaundice, and was bereaving his houses of the matronly government, deprived of which they were all of them likely soon to be at sixes and sevens with disorderly lacqueys, peccant maids, and cooks in hysterics.

Now if the master of his fortunes had come to Venice! —Nevil started the supposition in his mind often after hope had sunk.—Everard would have seen a young sailor and a soldier the thinner for wear, reclining in a gondola half the day, fanned by a brunette of the fine lineaments of the good blood of France. She chattered snatches of Venetian caught from the gondoliers, she was like a delicate cup of crystal brimming with the beauty of the place, and making one of them drink in all his impressions through her. Her features had the soft irregularities which run to rarities of beauty, as the ripple rocks the light; mouth, eyes, brows, nostrils, and bloomy cheeks played into one another liquidly; thought flew, tongue followed, and the flash of meaning quivered over them like night-lightning. Or oftener, to speak truth, tongue flew, thought followed: her age was but newly seventeen, and she was French.

Her name was Renée. She was the only daughter of the Comte de Croisnel. Her brother Roland owed his life to Nevil, this Englishman proud of a French name—Nevil Beauchamp. If there was any warm feeling below the unruffled surface of the girl's deliberate eyes while gazing on him, it was that he who had saved her brother must be nearly brother himself, yet was not quite, yet must be loved, yet not approached. He was her brother's brother-in-arms, brother-in-heart, not hers, yet hers through her brother. His French name rescued him from foreignness. He spoke her language with a piquant

accent, unlike the pitiable English. Unlike them, he was gracious, and could be soft and quick. The battle-scarlet, battle-black, Roland's tales of him threw round him in her imagination, made his gentleness a surprise. If, then, he was hers through her brother, what was she to him? The question did not spring clearly within her, though she was alive to every gradual change of manner toward the convalescent necessitated by the laws overawing her sex.

Venice was the French girl's dream. She was realizing it hungrily, revelling in it, anatomizing it, picking it to pieces, reviewing it, comparing her work with the original, and the original with her first conception, until beautiful sad Venice threatened to be no more her dream, and in dread of disenchantment she tried to take impressions humbly, really tasked herself not to analyze, not to dictate from a French footing, not to scorn. Not to be petulant with objects disappointing her, was an impossible task. She could not consent to a compromise with the people, the merchandize, the odours of the city. Gliding in the gondola through the narrow canals at low tide, she leaned back simulating stupor, with one word—'Venezia!' Her brother was commanded to smoke: 'Fumez, fumez, Roland!' As soon as the steel-crested prow had pushed into her Paradise of the Canal Grande, she quietly shrouded her hair from tobacco, and called upon rapture to recompense her for her sufferings. The black gondola was unendurable to her. She had accompanied her father to the Accademia, and mused on the golden Venetian streets of Carpaccio: she must have an open gondola to decorate in his manner, gaily, splendidly, and mock at her efforts—a warning to all that might hope to improve the prevailing gloom and squalor by levying contributions upon the Merceria! Her most constant admiration was for the English lord who used once to

ride on the Lido sands and visit the Armenian convent —a lord and a poet.

This was to be infinitely more than a naval lieutenant. But Nevil claimed her as little personally as he allowed her to be claimed by another. The graces of her freaks of petulance and airy whims, her sprightly jets of wilfulness, fleeting frowns of contempt, imperious decisions, were all beautiful, like silver-shifting waves, in this lustrous planet of her pure freedom; and if you will seize the divine conception of Artemis, and own the goddess French, you will understand his feelings.

But though he admired fervently, and danced obediently to her tunes, Nevil could not hear injustice done to a people or historic poetic city without trying hard to right the mind guilty of it. A newspaper correspondent, a Mr. John Holles, lingering on his road home from the army, put him on the track of an Englishman's books touching the spirit as well as the stones of Venice, and Nevil thanked him when he had turned some of the leaves.

The study of the books to school Renée was pursued, like the Bianchina's sleep, in gondoletta, and was not unlike it at intervals. A translated sentence was the key to a reverie. Renée leaned back, meditating; he forward, the book on his knee: Roland left them to themselves, and spied for the Bianchina behind the window-bars. The count was in the churches or the Galleries. Renée thought she began to comprehend the spirit of Venice, and chided her rebelliousness.

'But our Venice was the Venice of the decadence, then!' she said, complaining. Nevil read on, distrustful of the perspicuity of his own ideas.

'Ah, but,' said she, 'when these Venetians were rough men, chanting like our Huguenots, how cold it must have been here!'

She hoped she was not very wrong in preferring the

times of the great Venetian painters and martial doges to that period of faith and stone-cutting. What was done then might be beautiful, but the life was monotonous; she insisted that it was Huguenot; harsh, nasal, sombre, insolent, self-sufficient. Her eyes lightened for the flashing colours and pageantries, and the threads of desperate adventure crossing the rii to this and that palace-door and balcony, like faint blood-streaks; the times of Venice in full flower. She reasoned against the hard eloquent Englishman of the books. 'But we are known by our fruits, are we not? and the Venice I admire was surely the fruit of these stonecutters chanting hymns of faith; it could not but be: and if it deserved, as he says, to die disgraced, I think we should go back to them and ask them whether their minds were as pure and holy as he supposes.' Her French wits would not be subdued. Nevil pointed to the palaces. 'Pride,' said she. He argued that the original Venetians were not responsible for their offspring. 'You say it?' she cried, 'you, of an old race? Oh, no; you do not feel it!' and the trembling fervour of her voice convinced him that he did not, could not.

Renée said: 'I know my ancestors are bound up in me, by my sentiments to them; and so do you, M. Nevil. We shame them if we fail in courage and honour. Is it not so? If we break a single pledged word we cast shame on them. Why, that makes us what we are; that is our distinction: we dare not be weak if we would. And therefore when Venice is reproached with avarice and luxury, I choose to say—what do we hear of the children of misers? and I say I am certain that those old cold Huguenot stonecutters were proud and grasping. I am sure they were, and they *shall* share the blame.'

Nevil plunged into his volume.

He called on Roland for an opinion.

'Friend,' said Roland, 'opinions may differ: mine is, considering the defences of the windows, that the only way into these houses or out of them bodily was the doorway.'

Roland complimented his sister and friend on the prosecution of their studies: he could not understand a word of the subject, and yawning, he begged permission to be allowed to land and join the gondola at a distant quarter. The gallant officer was in haste to go.

Renée stared at her brother. He saw nothing; he said a word to the gondoliers, and quitted the boat. Mars was in pursuit. She resigned herself, and ceased then to be a girl.

CHAPTER VI

LOVE IN VENICE

The air flashed like heaven descending for Nevil alone with Renée. They had never been alone before. Such happiness belonged to the avenue of wishes leading to golden mists beyond imagination, and seemed, coming on him suddenly, miraculous. He leaned toward her like one who has broken a current of speech, and waits to resume it. She was all unsuspecting indolence, with gravely shadowed eyes.

'I throw the book down,' he said.

She objected. 'No; continue: I like it.'

Both of them divined that the book was there to do duty for Roland.

He closed it, keeping a finger among the leaves; a kind of anchorage in case of indiscretion.

'Permit me to tell you, M. Nevil, you are inclined to play truant to-day.'

'I am.'

'Now is the very time to read; for my poor Roland is at sea when we discuss our questions, and the book has driven him away.'

'But we have plenty of time to read. We miss the scenes.'

'The scenes are green shutters, wet steps, barcaroli, brown women, striped posts, a scarlet night-cap, a sick fig-tree, an old shawl, faded spots of colour, peeling walls. They might be figured by a trodden melon. They all resemble one another, and so do the days here.'

'That 's the charm. I wish I could look on you and think the same. You, as you are, for ever.'

'Would you not let me live my life?'

'I would not have you alter.'

'Please to be pathetic on that subject after I am wrinkled, monsieur.'

'You want commanding, mademoiselle.'

Renée nestled her chin, and gazed forward through her eyelashes.

'Venice is like a melancholy face of a former beauty who has ceased to rouge, or wipe away traces of her old arts,' she said, straining for common talk, and showing the strain.

'Wait; now we are rounding,' said he; 'now you have three of what you call your theatre-bridges in sight. The people mount and drop, mount and drop; I see them laugh. They are full of fun and good-temper. Look on living Venice.'

'Provided that my papa is not crossing when we go under.'

'Would he not trust you to me?'

'Yes.'

'He would? And you?'

'I do believe they are improvizing an operetta on the second bridge.'

'You trust yourself willingly?'

'As to my second brother. You hear them? How delightfully quick and spontaneous they are! Ah, silly creatures! they have stopped. They might have held it on for us while we were passing.'

'Where would the naturalness have been then?'

'Perhaps, M. Nevil, I do want commanding. I am wilful. Half my days will be spent in fits of remorse, I begin to think.'

'Come to me to be forgiven.'

'Shall I? I should be forgiven too readily.'

'I am not so sure of that.'

'Can you be harsh? No, not even with enemies. Least of all with . . . with us.'

Oh for the black gondola!—the little gliding dusky chamber for two; instead of this open, flaunting, gold and crimson cotton-work, which exacted discretion on his part and that of the mannerly gondoliers, and exposed him to window, balcony, bridge, and borderway.

They slipped on beneath a red balcony where a girl leaned on her folded arms, and eyed them coming and going by with Egyptian gravity.

'How strange a power of looking these people have,' said Renée, whose vivacity was fascinated to a steady sparkle by the girl. 'Tell me, is she glancing round at us?'

Nevil turned and reported that she was not. She had exhausted them while they were in transit; she had no minor curiosity.

'Let us fancy she is looking for her lover,' he said.

Renée added: 'Let us hope she will not escape being seen.'

'I give her my benediction,' said Nevil.

'And I,' said Renée; 'and adieu to her, if you please. Look for Roland.'

'You remind me; I have but a few instants.'

'M. Nevil, you are a preux of the times of my brother's patronymic. And there is my Roland awaiting us. Is he not handsome?'

'How glad you are to have him to relieve guard!'

Renée bent on Nevil one of her singular looks of raillery. She had hitherto been fencing at a serious disadvantage.

'Not so very glad,' she said, 'if that deprived me of the presence of his friend.'

Roland was her tower. But Roland was not yet on board. She had peeped from her citadel too rashly. Nevil had time to spring the flood of crimson in her cheeks, bright as the awning she reclined under.

'Would you have me with you always?'

'Assuredly,' said she, feeling the hawk in him, and trying to baffle him by fluttering.

'Always? for ever? and—listen—give me a title?'

Renée sang out to Roland like a bird in distress, and had some trouble not to appear too providentially rescued. Roland on board, she resumed the attack.

'M. Nevil vows he is a better brother to me than you, who dart away on an impulse and leave us threading all Venice till we do not know where we are, naughty brother!'

'My little sister, the spot where you are,' rejoined Roland, 'is precisely the spot where I left you, and I defy you to say you have gone on without me. This is the identical riva I stepped out on to buy you a packet of Venetian ballads.'

They recognized the spot, and for a confirmation of the surprising statement, Roland unrolled several sheets of printed blotting-paper, and rapidly read part of a

Canzonetta concerning Una Giovine who reproved her lover for his extreme addiction to wine:

'Ma sè, ma sè,
Cotanto bevè,
Mi nò, mi nò,
No ve sposerò.'

'This astounding vagabond preferred Nostrani to his heart's mistress. I tasted some of their Nostrani to see if it could be possible for a Frenchman to exonerate him.'

Roland's wry face at the mention of Nostrani brought out the chief gondolier, who delivered himself:—

'Signore, there be hereditary qualifications. One must be born Italian to appreciate the merits of Nostrani!'

Roland laughed. He had covered his delinquency in leaving his sister, and was full of an adventure to relate to Nevil, a story promising well for him.

CHAPTER VII

AN AWAKENING FOR BOTH

Renée was downcast. Had she not coquetted? The dear young Englishman had reduced her to defend herself, the which fair ladies, like besieged garrisons, cannot always do successfully without an attack at times, which, when the pursuer is ardent, is followed by a retreat, which is a provocation; and these things are coquettry. Her still fresh convent-conscience accused her of it pitilessly. She could not forgive her brother, and yet she dared not reproach him, for that would have inculpated Nevil. She stepped on to the Piazzetta thoughtfully. Her father was

at Florian's, perusing letters from France. 'We are to have the marquis here in a week, my child,' he said. Renée nodded. Involuntarily she looked at Nevil. He caught the look, with a lover's quick sense of misfortune in it.

She heard her brother reply to him: 'Who? the Marquis de Rouaillout? It is a jolly gaillard of fifty who spoils no fun.'

'You mistake his age, Roland,' she said.

'Forty-nine, then, my sister.'

'He is not that.'

'He looks it.'

'You have been absent.'

'Probably, my arithmetical sister, he has employed the interval to grow younger. They say it is the way with green gentlemen of a certain age. They advance and they retire. They perform the first steps of a quadrille ceremoniously, and we admire them.'

'What 's that?' exclaimed the Comte de Croisnel. 'You talk nonsense, Roland. M. le marquis is hardly past forty. He is in his prime.'

'Without question, mon père. For me, I was merely offering proof that he can preserve his prime unlimitedly.'

'He is not a subject for mockery, Roland.'

'Quite the contrary;—for reverence!'

'Another than you, my boy, and he would march you out.'

'I am to imagine, then, that his hand continues firm?'

'Imagine to the extent of your capacity; but remember that respect is always owing to your own family, and deliberate before you draw on yourself such a chastisement as mercy from an accepted member of it.'

Roland bowed and drummed on his knee.

The conversation had been originated by Renée for the enlightenment of Nevil and as a future protection to

herself. Now that it had disclosed its burden she could look at him no more, and when her father addressed her significantly: 'Marquise, you did me the honour to consent to accompany me to the Church of the Frari this afternoon?' she felt her self-accusation of coquettry biting under her bosom like a thing alive.

Roland explained the situation to Nevil.

'It is the mania with us, my dear Nevil, to marry our girls young to established men. Your established man carries usually all the signs, visible to the multitude or not, of the stages leading to that eminence. We cannot, I believe, unless we have the good fortune to boast the paternity of Hercules, disconnect ourselves from the steps we have mounted; not even, the priests inform us, if we are ascending to heaven; we carry them beyond the grave. However, it seems that our excellent marquis contrives to keep them concealed, and he is ready to face marriage —the Grandest Inquisitor, next to Death. Two furious matchmakers—our country, beautiful France, abounds in them—met one day; they were a comtesse and a baronne, and they settled the alliance. The bell was rung, and Renée came out of school. There is this to be said: she has no mother; the sooner a girl without a mother has a husband the better. That we are all agreed upon. I have no personal objection to the marquis; he has never been in any great scandals. He is Norman, and has estates in Normandy, Dauphiny, Touraine; he is hospitable, luxurious. Renée will have a fine hôtel in Paris. But I am eccentric: I have read in our old Fabliaux of December and May. Say the marquis is November, say October; he is still some distance removed from the plump Spring month. And we in our family have wits and passions. In fine, a bud of a rose in an old gentleman's button-hole! it is a challenge to the whole world of youth; and if the bud should leap? Enough of this

matter, friend Nevil; but sometimes a friend must allow himself to be bothered. I have perfect confidence in my sister, you see; I simply protest against her being exposed to . . . You know men. I protest, that is, in the privacy of my cigar-case, for I have no chance elsewhere. The affair is on wheels. The very respectable match-makers have kindled the marquis on the one hand, and my father on the other, and Renée passes obediently from the latter to the former. In India they sacrifice the widows, in France the virgins.'

Roland proceeded to relate his adventure. Nevil's inattention piqued him to salt and salt it wonderfully, until the old story of He and She had an exciting savour in its introductory chapter; but his friend was flying through the circles of the Inferno, and the babble of an ephemeral upper world simply affected him by its contrast with the overpowering horrors, repugnances, despairs, pities, rushing at him, surcharging his senses. Those that live much by the heart in their youth have sharp foretastes of the issues imaged for the soul. St. Mark's was in a minute struck black for him. He neither felt the sunlight nor understood why column and campanile rose, nor why the islands basked, and boats and people moved. All were as remote little bits of mechanism.

Nevil escaped, and walked in the direction of the Frari down calle and campiello. Only to see her—to compare her with the Renée of the past hour! But *that* Renée had been all the while a feast of delusion; she could never be resuscitated in the shape he had known, not even clearly visioned. Not a day of her, not an hour, not a single look had been his own. She had been sold when he first beheld her, and should, he muttered austerely, have been ticketed the property of a middle-aged man, a worn-out French marquis, whom she had agreed to marry, unwooed, without love—the creature of a transaction. But

she was innocent, she was unaware of the sin residing in a loveless marriage; and this restored her to him somewhat as a drowned body is given back to mourners.

After aimless walking he found himself on the Zattere, where the lonely Giudecca lies in front, covering mud and marsh and lagune-flames of later afternoon, and you have sight of the high mainland hills which seem to fling forth one over other to a golden sea-cape.

Midway on this unadorned Zattere, with its young trees and spots of shade, he was met by Renée and her father. Their gondola was below, close to the riva, and the count said, 'She is tired of standing gazing at pictures. There is a Veronese in one of the churches of the Giudecca opposite. Will you, M. Nevil, act as parade-escort to her here for half an hour, while I go over? Renée complains that she loses the vulgar art of walking in her complaisant attention to the fine Arts. I weary my poor child.'

Renée protested in a rapid chatter.

'Must I avow it?' said the count; 'she damps my enthusiasm a little.'

Nevil mutely accepted the office.

Twice that day was she surrendered to him: once in his ignorance, when time appeared an expanse of many sunny fields. On this occasion it puffed steam; yet, after seeing the count embark, he commenced the parade in silence.

'This is a nice walk,' said Renée; 'we have not the steps of the Riva dei Schiavoni. It is rather melancholy though. How did you discover it? I persuaded my papa to send the gondola round, and walk till we came to the water. Tell me about the Giudecca.'

'The Giudecca was a place kept apart for the Jews, I believe. You have seen their burial-ground on the Lido. Those are, I think. the Euganean hills. You are fond of Petrarch.'

'M. Nevil, omitting the allusion to the poet, you have, permit me to remark, the brevity without the precision of an accredited guide to notabilities.'

'I tell you what I know,' said Nevil, brooding on the finished tone and womanly aplomb of her language. It made him forget that she was a girl entrusted to his guardianship. His heart came out.

'Renée, if you loved him, I, on my honour, would not utter a word for myself. Your heart's inclinations are sacred for me. I would stand by, and be your friend and his. If he were young, that I might see a chance of it!'

She murmured, 'You should not have listened to Roland.'

'Roland should have warned me. How could I be near you and not . . . But I am nothing. Forget me; do not think I speak interestedly, except to save the dearest I have ever known from certain wretchedness. To yield yourself hand and foot for life! I warn you that it must end miserably. Your countrywomen . . . You have the habit in France; but like what are you treated? You! none like you in the whole world! You consent to be extinguished. And I have to look on! Listen to me now.'

Renée glanced at the gondola conveying her father. And he has not yet landed! she thought, and said, 'Do you pretend to judge of my welfare better than my papa?'

'Yes; in this. He follows a fashion. You submit to it. His anxiety is to provide for you. But I know the system is cursed by nature, and that means by heaven.'

'Because it is not English?'

'O Renée, my beloved for ever! Well, then, tell me, tell me you can say with pride and happiness that the Marquis de Rouaillout is to be your—there 's the word—husband!'

Renée looked across the water.

'Friend, if my father knew you were asking me!'

'I will speak to him.'

'Useless.'

'He is generous, he loves you.'

'He cannot break an engagement binding his honour.'

'Would you, Renée, would you—it must be said—consent to have it known to him—I beg for more than life—that your are not averse . . . that you support me?'

His failing breath softened the bluntness.

She replied, 'I would not have him ever break an engagement binding his honour.'

'You stretch the point of honour.'

'It is our way. Dear friend, we are French. And I presume to think that our French system is not always wrong, for if my father had not broken it by treating you as one of us and leaving me with you, should I have heard . . .?'

'I have displeased you.'

'Do not suppose that. But, I mean, a mother would not have left me.'

'You wished to avoid it.'

'Do not blame me. I had some instinct; you were very pale.'

'You knew I loved you.'

'No.'

'Yes; for this morning . . .'

'This morning it seemed to me, and I regretted my fancy, that you were inclined to trifle, as, they say, young men do.'

'With Renée?'

'With your friend Renée. And those are the hills of Petrarch's tomb? They are mountains.'

They were purple beneath a large brooding cloud that

hung against the sun, waiting for him to enfold him, and Nevil thought that a tomb there would be a welcome end, if he might lift Renée in one wild flight over the chasm gaping for her. He had no language for thoughts of such a kind, only tumultuous feeling.

She was immoveable, in perfect armour.

He said despairingly, 'Can you have realized what you are consenting to?'

She answered, 'It is my duty.'

'Your duty! it 's like taking up a dice-box, and flinging once, to certain ruin!'

'I must oppose my father to you, friend. Do you not understand duty to parents? They say the English are full of the idea of duty.'

'Duty to country, duty to oaths and obligations; but with us the heart is free to choose.'

'Free to choose, and when it is most ignorant?'

'The heart? ask it. Nothing is surer.'

'That is not what we are taught. We are taught that the heart deceives itself. The heart throws your dice-box; not prudent parents.'

She talked like a woman, to plead the cause of her obedience as a girl, and now silenced in the same manner that she had previously excited him.

'Then you are lost to me,' he said.

They saw the gondola returning.

'How swiftly it comes home; it loitered when it went,' said Renée. 'There sits my father, brimming with his picture; he has seen one more! We will congratulate him. This little boulevard is not much to speak of. The hills are lovely. Friend,' she dropped her voice on the gondola's approach, 'we have conversed on common subjects.'

Nevil had her hand in his, to place her in the gondola.

She seemed thankful that he should prefer to go round

on foot. At least, she did not join in her father's invitation to him. She leaned back, nestling her chin and half closing her eyes, suffering herself to be divided from him, borne away by forces she acquiesced in.

Roland was not visible till near midnight on the Piazza. The promenaders, chiefly military of the garrison, were few at that period of social protestation, and he could declare his disappointment aloud, ringingly, as he strolled up to Nevil, looking as if the cigar in his mouth and the fists entrenched in his wide trowsers-pockets were mortally at feud. His adventure had not pursued its course luminously. He had expected romance, and had met merchandize, and his vanity was offended. To pacify him, Nevil related how he had heard that since the Venetian rising of '49, Venetian ladies had issued from the ordeal of fire and famine of another pattern than the famous old Benzon one, in which they touched earthiest earth. He praised Republicanism for that. The spirit of the new and short-lived Republic wrought that change in Venice.

'Oh, if they 're republican as well as utterly decayed,' said Roland, 'I give them up; let them die virtuous.'

Nevil told Roland that he had spoken to Renée. He won sympathy, but Roland could not give him encouragement. They crossed and recrossed the shadow of the great campanile, on the warm-white stones of the square, Nevil admitting the weight of whatsoever Roland pointed to him in favour of the arrangement according to French notions, and indeed, of aristocratic notions everywhere, saving that it was imperative for Renée to be disposed of in marriage early. Why rob her of her young springtime!

'French girls,' replied Roland, confused by the nature of the explication in his head—'well, they 're not English; they want a hand to shape them, otherwise they grow all

awry. My father will not have one of her aunts to live with him, so there she is. But, my dear Nevil, I owe my life to you, and I was no party to this affair. I would do anything to help you. What says Renée?'

'She obeys.'

'Exactly. You see! Our girls are chess-pieces until they 're married. Then they have life and character: sometimes too much.'

'She is not like them, Roland; she is like none. When I spoke to her first, she affected no astonishment; never was there a creature so nobly sincere. She 's a girl in heart, not in mind. Think of her sacrificed to this man thrice her age!'

'She differs from other girls only on the surface, Nevil. As for the man, I wish she were going to marry a younger. I wish, yes, my friend,' Roland squeezed Nevil's hand, 'I wish! I 'm afraid it 's hopeless. She did not tell you to hope?'

'Not by one single sign,' said Nevil.

'You see, my friend!'

'For that reason,' Nevil rejoined, with the calm fanaticism of the passion of love, 'I hope all the more . . . because I will not believe that she, so pure and good, can be sacrificed. Put me aside—I am nothing. I hope to save her from that.'

'We have now,' said Roland, 'struck the current of duplicity. You are really in love, my poor fellow.'

Lover and friend came to no conclusion, except that so lovely a night was not given for slumber. A small round brilliant moon hung almost globed in the depths of heaven, and the image of it fell deep between San Giorgio and the Dogana.

Renée had the scene from her window, like a dream given out of sleep. She lay with both arms thrown up beneath her head on the pillow, her eyelids wide open, and

her visage set and stern. Her bosom rose and sank regularly but heavily. The fluctuations of a night stormy for her, hitherto unknown, had sunk her to this trance, in which she lay like a creature flung on shore by the waves. She heard her brother's voice and Nevil's, and the pacing of their feet. She saw the long shaft of moonlight broken to zigzags of mellow lightning, and wavering back to steadiness; dark San Giorgio, and the sheen of the Dogana's front. But the visible beauty belonged to a night that had shivered repose, humiliated and wounded her, destroyed her confident happy half-infancy of heart, and she had flown for a refuge to hard feelings. Her predominant sentiment was anger; an anger that touched all and enveloped none, for it was quite fictitious, though she felt it, and suffered from it. She turned it on Nevil, as against an enemy, and became the victim in his place. Tears for him filled in her eyes, and ran over; she disdained to notice them, and blinked offendedly to have her sight clear of the weakness; but these interceding tears would flow; it was dangerous to blame him harshly. She let them roll down, figuring to herself with quiet simplicity of mind that her spirit was independent of them as long as she restrained her hands from being accomplices by brushing them away, as weeping girls do that cry for comfort. Nevil had saved her brother's life, and had succoured her countrymen; he loved her, and was a hero. He should not have said he loved her; that was wrong; and it was shameful that he should have urged her to disobey her father. But this hero's love of her might plead excuses she did not know of; and if he was to be excused, he, unhappy that he was, had a claim on her for more than tears. She wept resentfully. Forces above her own swayed and hurried her like a lifeless body dragged by flying wheels: they could not unnerve her will, or rather, what it really was, her

sense of submission to a destiny. Looked at from the height of the palm-waving cherubs over the fallen martyr in the picture, she seemed as nerveless as a dreamy girl. The raised arms and bent elbows were an illusion of indifference. Her shape was rigid from hands to feet, as if to keep in a knot the resolution of her mind; for the second and in that young season the stronger nature grafted by her education fixed her to the religious duty of obeying and pleasing her father, in contempt, almost in abhorrence, of personal inclinations tending to thwart him and imperil his pledged word. She knew she had inclinations to be tender. Her hands released, how promptly might she not have been confiding her innumerable perplexities of sentiment and emotion to paper, undermining self-governance; self-respect, perhaps! Further than that, she did not understand the feelings she struggled with; nor had she any impulse to gaze on him, the cause of her trouble, who walked beside her brother below, talking betweenwhiles in the night's grave undertones. Her trouble was too overmastering; it had seized her too mysteriously, coming on her solitariness without warning in the first watch of the night, like a spark crackling serpentine along dry leaves to sudden flame. A thought of Nevil and a regret had done it.

CHAPTER VIII

A NIGHT ON THE ADRIATIC

The lovers met after Roland had spoken to his sister—not exactly to advocate the cause of Nevil, though he was under the influence of that grave night's walk with him, but to sound her and see whether she at all shared Nevil's

view of her situation. Roland felt the awfulness of a French family arrangement of a marriage, and the impertinence of a foreign Cupid's intrusion, too keenly to plead for his friend: at the same time he loved his friend and his sister, and would have been very ready to smile blessings on them if favourable circumstances had raised a signal; if, for example, apoplexy or any other cordial ex machinâ intervention had removed the middle-aged marquis; and, perhaps, if Renée had shown the repugnance to her engagement which Nevil declared she must have in her heart, he would have done more than smile; he would have laid the case deferentially before his father. His own opinion was that young unmarried women were incapable of the passion of love, being, as it were, but half-feathered in that state, and unable to fly; and Renée confirmed it. The suspicion of an advocacy on Nevil's behalf steeled her. His tentative observations were checked at the outset.

'Can such things be spoken of to me, Roland? I am plighted. You know it.'

He shrugged, said a word of pity for Nevil, and went forth to let his friend know that it was as he had predicted: Renée was obedience in person, like a rightly educated French girl. He strongly advised his friend to banish all hope of her from his mind. But the mind he addressed was of a curious order; far-shooting, tough, persistent, and when acted on by the spell of devotion, indomitable. Nevil put hope aside, or rather, he clad it in other garments, in which it was hardly to be recognized by himself, and said to Roland: 'You must bear this from me; you must let me follow you to the end, and if she wavers she will find me near.'

Roland could not avoid asking the use of it, considering that Renée, however much she admired and liked, was not in love with him.

Nevil resigned himself to admit that she was not: 'and therefore,' said he, 'you won't object to my remaining.'

Renée greeted Nevil with as clear a conventional air as a woman could assume.

She was going, she said, to attend High Mass in the church of S. Moïse, and she waved her devoutest Roman Catholicism to show the breadth of the division between them. He proposed to go likewise. She was mute. After some discourse she contrived to say inoffensively that people who strolled into her churches for the music, or out of curiosity, played the barbarian.

'Well, I will not go,' said Nevil.

'But I do not wish to number you among them,' she said.

'Then,' said Nevil, 'I will go, for it cannot be barbarous to try to be with you.'

'No, that is wickedness,' said Renée.

She was sensible that conversation betrayed her, and Nevil's apparently deliberate pursuit signified to her that he must be aware of his mastery, and she resented it, and stumbled into pitfalls whenever she opened her lips. It seemed to be denied to them to utter what she meant, if indeed she had a meaning in speaking, save to hurt herself cruelly by wounding the man who had caught her in the toils: and so long as she could imagine that she was the only one hurt, she was the braver and the harsher for it; but at the sight of Nevil in pain her heart relented and shifted, and discovering it to be so weak as to be almost at his mercy, she defended it with an aggressive unkindness, for which, in charity to her sweeter nature, she had to ask his pardon, and then had to fib to give reasons for her conduct, and then to pretend to herself that her pride was humbled by him; a most humiliating round, constantly recurring; the worse for the reflection that she created it. She attempted silence. Nevil

spoke, and was like the magical piper: she was compelled to follow him and dance the round again, with the wretched thought that it must resemble coquettry. Nevil did not think so, but a very attentive observer now upon the scene, and possessed of his half of the secret, did, and warned him. Rosamund Culling added that the French girl might be only an unconscious coquette, for she was young. The critic would not undertake to pronounce on her suggestion, whether the candour apparent in merely coquettish instincts was not more dangerous than a battery of the arts of the sex. She had heard Nevil's frank confession, and seen Renée twice, when she tried in his service, though not greatly wishing for success, to stir the sensitive girl for an answer to his attachment. Probably she went to work transparently, after the insular fashion of opening a spiritual mystery with the lancet. Renée suffered herself to be probed here and there, and revealed nothing of the pain of the operation. She said to Nevil, in Rosamund's hearing:

'Have you the sense of honour acute in your country?' Nevil inquired for the àpropos.

'None,' said she.

Such pointed insolence disposed Rosamund to an irritable antagonism, without reminding her that she had given some cause for it.

Renée said to her presently: 'He saved my brother's life'; the àpropos being as little perceptible as before.

Her voice dropped to her sweetest deep tones, and there was a supplicating beam in her eyes, unintelligible to the direct Englishwoman, except under the heading of a power of witchery fearful to think of in one so young, and loved by Nevil.

The look was turned upon her, not upon her hero, and Rosamund thought, 'Does she want to entangle me as well?'

It was, in truth, a look of entreaty from woman to woman, signifying need of womanly help. Renée would have made a confidante of her, if she had not known her to be Nevil's, and devoted to him. 'I would speak to you, but that I feel you would betray me,' her eyes had said. The strong sincerity dwelling amid multiform complexities might have made itself comprehensible to the English lady for a moment or so, had Renée spoken words to her ears; but belief in it would hardly have survived the girl's next convolutions. 'She is intensely French,' Rosamund said to Nevil—a volume of insular criticism in a sentence.

'You do not know her, ma'am,' said Nevil. 'You think her older than she is, and that is the error I fell into. She is a child.'

'A serpent in the egg is none the less a serpent, Nevil. Forgive me; but when she tells you the case is hopeless!'

'No case is hopeless till a man consents to think it is; and I shall stay.'

'But then again, Nevil, you have not consulted your uncle.'

'Let him see her! let him only see her!'

Rosamund Culling reserved her opinion compassionately. His uncle would soon be calling to have him home: society panted for him to make much of him: and here he was, cursed by one of his notions of duty, in attendance on a captious young French beauty, who was the less to be excused for not dismissing him peremptorily, if she cared for him at all. His career, which promised to be so brilliant, was spoiling at the outset. Rosamund thought of Renée almost with detestation, as a species of sorceress that had dug a trench in her hero's road, and unhorsed and fast fettered him.

The marquis was expected immediately. Renée sent

up a little note to Mrs. Culling's chamber early in the morning, and it was with an air of one-day-more-to-ourselves, that, meeting her, she entreated the English lady to join the expedition mentioned in her note. Roland had hired a big Chioggian fishing-boat to sail into the gulf at night, and return at dawn, and have sight of Venice rising from the sea. Her father had declined; but M. Nevil wished to be one of the party, and in that case . . . ? . . . Renée threw herself beseechingly into the mute interrogation, keeping both of Rosamund's hands. They could slip away only by deciding to, and this rare Englishwoman had no taste for the petty overt hostilities. 'If I can be of use to you,' she said.

'If you can bear sea-pitching and tossing for the sake of the loveliest sight in the whole world,' said Renée.

'I know it well,' Rosamund replied.

Renée rippled her eyebrows. She divined a something behind that remark, and as she was aware of the grief of Rosamund's life, her quick intuition whispered that it might be connected with the gallant officer dead on the battle-field.

'Madame, if you know it too well . . .' she said.

'No; it is always worth seeing,' said Rosamund, 'and I think, mademoiselle, with your permission, I should accompany you.'

'It is only a whim of mine, madame. I can stay on shore.'

'Not when it is unnecessary to forego a pleasure.'

'Say, my last day of freedom.'

Renée kissed her hand.

She is terribly winning, Rosamund avowed. Renée was in debate whether the woman devoted to Nevil would hear her and help.

Just then Roland and Nevil returned from their boat, where they had left carpenters and upholsterers at work,

and the delicate chance for an understanding between the ladies passed by.

The young men were like waves of ocean overwhelming it, they were so full of their boat, and the scouring and cleaning out of it, and provisioning, and making it worthy of its freight. Nevil was surprised that Mrs. Culling should have consented to come, and asked her if she really wished it—really; and 'Really,' said Rosamund; 'certainly.'

'Without dubitation,' cried Roland. 'And now my little Renée has no more shore-qualms; she is smoothly chaperoned, and madame will present us tea on board. All the etcæteras of life are there, and a mariner's eye in me spies a breeze at sunset to waft us out of Malamocco.'

The count listened to the recital of their preparations with his usual absent interest in everything not turning upon Art, politics, or social intrigue. He said, 'Yes, good, good,' at the proper intervals, and walked down the riva to look at the busy boat, said to Nevil, 'You are a sailor; I confide my family to you,' and prudently counselled Renée to put on the dresses she could toss to the deep without regrets. Mrs. Culling he thanked fervently for a wonderful stretch of generosity in lending her presence to the madcaps.

Altogether the day was a reanimation of external Venice. But there was a thunderbolt in it; for about an hour before sunset, when the ladies were superintending and trying not to criticize the ingenious efforts to produce a make-believe of comfort on board for them, word was brought down to the boat by the count's valet that the Marquis de Rouaillout had arrived. Renée turned her face to her brother superciliously. Roland shrugged. 'Note this, my sister,' he said; 'an anticipation of dates in paying visits precludes the ripeness of the sentiment of welcome. It is, however, true that the marquis has less time to spare than others.'

'We have started; we are on the open sea. How can we put back?' said Renée.

'You hear, François; we are on the open sea,' Roland addressed the valet.

'Monsieur has cut loose his communications with land,' François responded, and bowed from the landing.

Nevil hastened to make this a true report; but they had to wait for tide as well as breeze, and pilot through intricate mud-channels before they could see the outside of the Lido, and meanwhile the sun lay like a golden altar-platter on mud-banks made bare by the ebb, and curled in drowsy yellow links along the currents. All they could do was to push off and hang loose, bumping to right and left in the midst of volleys and countervolleys of fishy Venetian, Chioggian, and Dalmatian, quite as strong as anything ever heard down the Canalaggio. The representatives of these dialects trotted the decks and hung their bodies half over the sides of the vessels to deliver fire, flashed eyes and snapped fingers, not a whit less fierce than hostile crews in the old wars hurling an interchange of stink-pots, and then resumed the trot, apparently in search of fresh ammunition. An Austrian sentinel looked on passively, and a police inspector peeringly. They were used to it. Happily, the combustible import of the language was unknown to the ladies, and Nevil's attempts to keep his crew quiet, contrasting with Roland's phlegm, which a Frenchman can assume so philosophically when his tongue is tied, amused them. During the clamour, Renée saw her father beckoning from the riva. She signified that she was no longer in command of circumstances; the vessel was off. But the count stamped his foot, and nodded imperatively. Thereupon Roland repeated the eloquent demonstrations of Renée, and the count lost patience, and Roland shouted, 'For the love of heaven, don't join this babel; we 're

nearly bursting.' The rage of the babel was allayed by degrees, though not appeased, for the boat was behaving wantonly, as the police officer pointed out to the count.

Renée stood up to bend her head. It was in reply to a salute from the Marquis de Rouaillout, and Nevil beheld his rival.

'M. le Marquis, seeing it is out of the question that we can come to you, will you come to us?' cried Roland.

The marquis gesticulated 'With alacrity' in every limb.

'We will bring you back on to-morrow midnight's tide, safe, we promise you.'

The marquis advanced a foot, and withdrew it. Could he have heard correctly? They were to be out a whole night at sea! The count dejectedly confessed his incapability to restrain them: the young desperadoes were ready for anything. He had tried the voice of authority, and was laughed at. As to Renée, an English lady was with her.

'The English lady must be as mad as the rest,' said the marquis.

'The English are mad,' said the count; 'but their women are strict upon the proprieties.'

'Possibly, my dear count; but what room is there for the proprieties on board a fishing-boat?'

'It is even as you say, my dear marquis.'

'You allow it?'

'Can I help myself? Look at them. They tell me they have given the boat the fittings of a yacht.'

'And the young man?'

'That is the M. Beauchamp of whom I have spoken to you, the very pick of his country, fresh, lively, original; and he can converse. You will like him.'

'I hope so,' said the marquis, and roused a doleful laugh. 'It would seem that one does not arrive by hastening!'

'Oh! but my dear marquis, you have paid the compliment; you are like Spring thrusting in a bunch of lilac while the winds of winter blow. If you were not expected, your expeditiousness is appreciated, be sure.'

Roland fortunately did not hear the marquis compared to Spring. He was saying: 'I wonder what those two elderly gentlemen are talking about'; and Nevil confused his senses by trying to realize that one of them was destined to be the husband of his now speechless Renée. The marquis was clad in a white silken suit, and a dash of red round the neck set off his black beard; but when he lifted his broad straw hat, a baldness of sconce shone. There was elegance in his gestures; he looked a gentleman, though an ultra-Gallican one, that is, too scrupulously finished for our taste, smelling of the valet. He had the habit of balancing his body on the hips, as if to emphasize a juvenile vigour, and his general attitude suggested an idea that he had an oration for you. Seen from a distance, his baldness and strong nasal projection were not winning features; the youthful standard he had evidently prescribed to himself in his dress and his ready jerks of acquiescence and delivery might lead a forlorn rival to conceive him something of an ogre straining at an Adonis. It could not be disputed that he bore his disappointment remarkably well; the more laudably, because his position was within a step of the ridiculous, for he had shot himself to the mark, despising sleep, heat, dust, dirt, diet, and lo, that charming object was deliberately slipping out of reach, proving his headlong journey an absurdity.

As he stood declining to participate in the lunatic

voyage, and bidding them perforce good speed off the tips of his fingers, Renée turned her eyes on him, and away. She felt a little smart of pity, arising partly from her antagonism to Roland's covert laughter: but it was the colder kind of feminine pity, which is nearer to contempt than to tenderness. She sat still, placid outwardly, in fear of herself, so strange she found it to be borne out to sea by her sailor lover under the eyes of her betrothed. She was conscious of a tumultuous rush of sensations, none of them of a very healthy kind, coming as it were from an unlocked chamber of her bosom, hitherto of unimagined contents; and the marquis being now on the spot to defend his own, she no longer blamed Nevil: it was otherwise utterly. All the sweeter side of pity was for him.

He was at first amazed by the sudden exquisite transition. Tenderness breathed from her, in voice, in look, in touch; for she accepted his help that he might lead her to the stern of the vessel, to gaze well on setting Venice, and sent lightnings up his veins; she leaned beside him over the vessel's rails, not separated from him by the breadth of a fluttering riband. Like him, she scarcely heard her brother when for an instant he intervened, and with Nevil she said adieu to Venice, where the faint red Doge's palace was like the fading of another sunset north-westward of the glory along the hills. Venice dropped lower and lower, breasting the waters, until it was a thin line in air. The line was broken, and ran in dots, with here and there a pillar standing on opal sky. At last the topmost campanile sank.

Renée looked up at the sails, and back for the submerged city.

'It is gone!' she said, as though a marvel had been worked; and swiftly: 'we have one night!'

She breathed it half like a question, like a petition,

catching her breath. The adieu to Venice was her assurance of liberty, but Venice hidden rolled on her the sense of the return and plucked shrewdly at her tether of bondage.

They set their eyes toward the dark gulf ahead. The night was growing starry. The softly ruffled Adriatic tossed no foam.

'One night?' said Nevil; 'one? Why only one?'

Renée shuddered. 'Oh! do not speak.'

'Then, give me your hand.'

'There, my friend.'

He pressed a hand that was like a quivering chord. She gave it as though it had been his own to claim. But that it meant no more than a hand he knew by the very frankness of her compliance, in the manner natural to her; and this was the charm, it filled him with her peculiar image and spirit, and while he held it he was subdued.

Lying on the deck at midnight, wrapt in his cloak and a coil of rope for a pillow, considerably apart from jesting Roland, the recollection of that little sanguine spot of time when Renée's life-blood ran with his, began to heave under him like a swelling sea. For Nevil the starred black night was Renée. Half his heart was in it: but the combative division flew to the morning and the deadly iniquity of the marriage, from which he resolved to save her; in pure devotedness, he believed. And so he closed his eyes. She, a girl, with a heart fluttering open and fearing, felt only that she had lost herself somewhere, and she had neither sleep nor symbols, nothing but a sense of infinite strangeness, as though she were borne superhumanly through space.

CHAPTER IX

MORNING AT SEA UNDER THE ALPS

THE breeze blew steadily, enough to swell the sails and sweep the vessel on smoothly. The night air dropped no moisture on deck.

Nevil Beauchamp dozed for an hour. He was awakened by light on his eyelids, and starting up beheld the many pinnacles of grey and red rocks and shadowy high white regions at the head of the gulf waiting for the sun; and the sun struck them. One by one they came out in crimson flame, till the vivid host appeared to have stepped forward. The shadows on the snow-fields deepened to purple below an irradiation of rose and pink and dazzling silver. There of all the world you might imagine Gods to sit. A crowd of mountains endless in range, erect, or flowing, shattered and arid, or leaning in smooth lustre, hangs above the gulf. The mountains are sovereign Alps, and the sea is beneath them. The whole gigantic body keeps the sea, as with a hand, to right and left.

Nevil's personal rapture craved for Renée with the second long breath he drew; and now the curtain of her tent-cabin parted, and greeting him with a half smile, she looked out. The Adriatic was dark, the Alps had heaven to themselves. Crescents and hollows, rosy mounds, white shelves, shining ledges, domes and peaks, all the towering heights were in illumination from Friuli into farthest Tyrol; beyond earth to the stricken senses of the gazers. Colour was stedfast on the massive front ranks: it wavered in the remoteness, and was quick and dim as though it fell on beating wings; but there too

divine colour seized and shaped forth solid forms, and thence away to others in uttermost distances where the incredible flickering gleam of new heights arose, that soared, or stretched their white uncertain curves in sky like wings traversing infinity.

It seemed unlike morning to the lovers, but as if night had broken with a revelation of the kingdom in the heart of night. While the broad smooth waters rolled unlighted beneath that transfigured upper sphere, it was possible to think the scene might vanish like a view caught out of darkness by lightning. Alp over burning Alp, and around them a hueless dawn! The two exulted: they threw off the load of wonderment, and in looking they had the delicious sensation of flight in their veins.

Renée stole toward Nevil. She was mystically shaken and at his mercy; and had he said then, 'Over to the other land, away from Venice!' she would have bent her head.

She asked his permission to rouse her brother and madame, so that they should not miss the scene.

Roland lay in the folds of his military greatcoat, too completely happy to be disturbed, Nevil Beauchamp chose to think; and Rosamund Culling, he told Renée, had been separated from her husband last on these waters.

'Ah! to he unhappy here,' sighed Renée. 'I fancied it when I begged her to join us. It was in her voice.'

The impressionable girl trembled. He knew he was dear to her, and for that reason, judging of her by himself, he forbore to urge his advantage, conceiving it base to fear that loving him she could yield her hand to another; and it was the critical instant. She was almost in his grasp. A word of sharp entreaty would have swung her round to see her situation with his eyes, and detest and shrink from it. He committed the capital fault of treating her as his equal in passion and courage, not as

metal ready to run into the mould under temporary stress of fire.

Even later in the morning, when she was cooler and he had come to speak, more than her own strength was needed to resist him. The struggle was hard. The boat's head had been put about for Venice, and they were among the dusky-red Chioggian sails in fishing quarters, expecting momently a campanile to signal the sea-city over the level. Renée waited for it in suspense. To her it stood for the implacable key of a close and stifling chamber, so different from this brilliant boundless region of air, that she sickened with the apprehension; but she knew it must appear, and soon, and therewith the contraction and the gloom it indicated to her mind. He talked of the beauty. She fretted at it, and was her petulant self again in an epigrammatic note of discord.

He let that pass.

'Last night you said "one night,"' he whispered. 'We will have another sail before we leave Venice.'

'One night, and in a little time one hour! and next one minute! and there 's the end,' said Renée.

Her tone alarmed him. 'Have you forgotten that you gave me your hand?'

'I gave my hand to my friend.'

'You gave it to me for good.'

'No; I dared not; it is not mine.'

'It is mine,' said Beauchamp.

Renée pointed to the dots and severed lines and isolated columns of the rising city, black over bright sea.

'Mine there as well as here,' said Beauchamp, and looked at her with the fiery zeal of eyes intent on minutest signs for a confirmation, to shake that sad negation of her face.

'Renée, you cannot break the pledge of the hand you gave me last night.'

'You tell me how weak a creature I am.'

'You are me, myself; more, better than me. And say, would you not rather coast here and keep the city under water?'

She could not refrain from confessing that she would be glad never to land there.

'So, when you land, go straight to your father,' said Beauchamp, to whose conception it was a simple act resulting from the avowal.

'Oh! you torture me,' she cried. Her eyelashes were heavy with tears. 'I cannot do it. Think what you will of me! And, my friend, help me. Should you not help me? I have not once actually disobeyed my father, and he has indulged me, but he has been sure of me as a dutiful girl. That is my source of self-respect. My friend can always be my friend.'

'Yes, while it 's not too late,' said Beauchamp.

She observed a sudden stringing of his features. He called to the chief boatman, made his command intelligible to that portly capitano, and went on to Roland, who was puffing his after-breakfast cigarette in conversation with the tolerant English lady.

'You condescend to notice us, Signor Beauchamp?' said Roland. 'The vessel is up to some manœuvre?'

'We have decided not to land,' replied Beauchamp. 'And Roland,' he checked the Frenchman's shout of laughter, 'I think of making for Trieste. Let me speak to you, to both. Renée is in misery. She must not go back.'

Roland sprang to his feet, stared, and walked over to Renée.

'Nevil,' said Rosamund Culling, 'do you know what you are doing?'

'Perfectly,' said he. 'Come to her. She is a girl, and I must think and act for her.'

Roland met them.

'My dear Nevil, are you in a state of delusion? Renée denies . . .'

'There 's no delusion, Roland. I am determined to stop a catastrophe. I see it as plainly as those Alps. There is only one way, and that 's the one I have chosen.'

'Chosen! my friend'. But allow me to remind you that you have others to consult. And Renée herself . . .'

'She is a girl. She loves me, and I speak for her.'

'She has said it?'

'She has more than said it.'

'You strike me to the deck, Nevil. Either you are downright mad—which seems the likeliest, or we are all in a nightmare. Can you suppose I will let my sister be carried away the deuce knows where, while her father is expecting her, and to fulfil an engagement affecting his pledged word?'

Beauchamp simply replied:

'Come to her.'

CHAPTER X

A SINGULAR COUNCIL

The four sat together under the shadow of the helmsman, by whom they were regarded as voyagers in debate upon the question of some hours further on salt water. 'No bora,' he threw in at intervals, to assure them that the obnoxious wind of the Adriatic need not disturb their calculations.

It was an extraordinary sitting, but none of the parties to it thought of it so when Nevil Beauchamp had plunged them into it. He compelled them, even Renée—and she would have flown had there been wings on her shoulders—

to feel something of the life and death issues present to his soul, and submit to the discussion, in plain language of the market-place, of the most delicate of human subjects for her, for him, and hardly less for the other two. An overmastering fervour can do this. It upsets the vessel we float in, and we have to swim our way out of deep waters by the directest use of the natural faculties, without much reflection on the change in our habits. To others not under such an influence the position seems impossible. This discussion occurred. Beauchamp opened the case in a couple of sentences, and when the turn came for Renée to speak, and she shrank from the task in manifest pain, he spoke for her, and no one heard her contradiction. She would have wished the fearful impetuous youth to succeed if she could have slept through the storm he was rousing.

Roland appealed to her. 'You! my sister, it is you that consent to this wild freak, enough to break your father's heart?'

He had really forgotten his knowledge of her character —what much he knew—in the dust of the desperation flung about her by Nevil Beauchamp.

She shook her head; she had not consented.

'The man she loves is her voice and her will,' said Beauchamp. 'She gives me her hand and I lead her.'

Roland questioned her. It could not be denied that she had given her hand, and her bewildered senses made her think that it had been with an entire abandonment; and in the heat of her conflict of feelings, the deliciousness of yielding to him curled round and enclosed her, as in a cool humming sea-shell.

'Renée!' said Roland.

'Brother!' she cried.

'You see that I cannot suffer you to be borne away.'

'No; do not!'

But the boat was flying fast from Venice, and she could have fallen at his feet and kissed them for not countermanding it.

'You are in my charge, my sister.'

'Yes.'

'And now, Nevil, between us two,' said Roland.

Beauchamp required no challenge. He seemed, to Rosamund Culling, twice older than he was, strangely adept, yet more strangely wise of worldly matters, and eloquent too. But it was the eloquence of frenzy, madness, in Roland's ear. The arrogation of a terrible foresight that harped on present and future to persuade him of the righteousness of this headlong proceeding advocated by his friend, vexed his natural equanimity. The argument was out of the domain of logic. He could hardly sit to listen, and tore at his moustache at each end. Nevertheless his sister listened. The mad Englishman accomplished the miracle of making her listen, and appear to consent.

Roland laughed scornfully. 'Why Trieste? I ask you, why Trieste? You can't have a Catholic priest at your bidding, without her father's sanction.'

'We leave Renée at Trieste, under the care of madame,' said Beauchamp, 'and we return to Venice, and I go to your father. This method protects Renée from annoyance.'

'It strikes me that if she arrives at any determination she must take the consequences.'

'She does. She is brave enough for that. But she is a girl; she has to fight the battle of her life in a day, and I am her lover, and she leaves it to me.'

'Is my sister such a coward?' said Roland.

Renée could only call out his name.

'It will never do, my dear Nevil'; Roland tried to deal with his unreasonable friend affectionately. 'I am responsible for her. It 's your own fault—if you had not

saved my life I should not have been in your way. Here I am, and your proposal can't be heard of. Do as you will, both of you, when you step ashore in Venice.'

'If she goes back she is lost,' said Beauchamp, and he attacked Roland on the side of his love for Renée, and for him.

Roland was inflexible. Seeing which, Renée said, 'To Venice, quickly, my brother!' and now she almost sighed with relief to think that she was escaping from this hurricane of a youth, who swept her off her feet and wrapt her whole being in a delirium.

'We were in sight of the city just now!' cried Roland, staring and frowning. 'What 's this?'

Beauchamp answered him calmly, 'The boat 's under my orders.'

'Talk madness, but don't act it,' said Roland. 'Round with the boat at once. Hundred devils! you haven't your wits.'

To his amazement, Beauchamp refused to alter the boat's present course.

'You heard my sister?' said Roland.

'You frighten her,' said Beauchamp.

'You heard her wish to return to Venice, I say.'

'She has no wish that is not mine.'

It came to Roland's shouting his command to the men, while Beauchamp pointed the course on for them.

'You will make this a ghastly pleasantry,' said Roland.

'I do what I know to be right,' said Beauchamp.

'You want an altercation before these fellows?'

'There won't be one; they obey me.'

Roland blinked rapidly in wrath and doubt of mind.

'Madame,' he stooped to Rosamund Culling, with a happy inspiration, 'convince him; you have known him longer than I, and I desire not to lose my friend. And tell me, madame—I can trust you to be truth itself, and

you can see it is actually the time for truth to be spoken —is he justified in taking my sister's hand? You perceive that I am obliged to appeal to you. Is he not dependent on his uncle? And is he not, therefore, in your opinion, bound in reason as well as in honour to wait for his uncle's approbation before he undertakes to speak for my sister? And, since the occasion is urgent, let me ask you one thing more: whether, by your knowledge of his position, you think him entitled to presume to decide upon my sister's destiny? She, you are aware, is not so young but that she can speak for herself . . .'

'There you are wrong, Roland,' said Beauchamp; 'she can neither speak nor think for herself: you lead her blindfolded.'

'And you, my friend, suppose that you are wiser than any of us. It is understood. I venture to appeal to madame on the point in question.'

The poor lady's heart beat dismally. She was constrained to answer, and said, 'His uncle is one who must be consulted.'

'You hear that, Nevil,' said Roland.

Beauchamp looked at her sharply; angrily, Rosamund feared. She had struck his hot brain with the vision of Everard Romfrey as with a bar of iron. If Rosamund had inclined to the view that he was sure of his uncle's support, it would have seemed to him a simple confirmation of his sentiments, but he was not of the same temper now as when he exclaimed, 'Let him see her!' and could imagine, give him only Renée's love, the world of men subservient to his wishes.

Then he was dreaming; he was now in fiery earnest, for that reason accessible to facts presented to him; and Rosamund's reluctantly spoken words brought his stubborn uncle before his eyes, inflicting a sense of helplessness of the bitterest kind.

They were all silent. Beauchamp stared at the lines of the deck-planks.

His scheme to rescue Renée was right and good; but was he the man that should do it? And was she, moreover, he thought—speculating on her bent head—the woman to be forced to brave the world with him, and poverty? She gave him no sign. He was assuredly not the man to pretend to powers he did not feel himself to possess, and though from a personal, and still more from a lover's, inability to see all round him at one time and accurately to weigh the forces at his disposal, he had gone far, he was not a wilful dreamer nor so very selfish a lover. The instant his consciousness of a superior strength failed him he acknowledged it.

Renée did not look up. She had none of those lightnings of primitive energy, nor the noble rashness and reliance on her lover, which his imagination had filled her with; none. That was plain. She could not even venture to second him. Had she done so he would have held out. He walked to the head of the boat without replying.

Soon after this the boat was set for Venice again.

When he rejoined his companions he kissed Rosamund's hand, and Renée, despite a confused feeling of humiliation and anger, loved him for it.

Glittering Venice was now in sight; the dome of Sta. Maria Salute shining like a globe of salt.

Roland flung his arm round his friend's neck, and said, 'Forgive me.'

'You do what you think right,' said Beauchamp.

'You are a perfect man of honour, my friend, and a woman would adore you. Girls are straws. It 's part of Renée's religion to obey her father. That 's why I was astonished! . . . I owe you my life, and I would willingly give you my sister in part payment, if I had the

giving of her; most willingly. The case is, that she 's a child, and you?'

'Yes, I 'm dependent,' Beauchamp assented. 'I can't act; I see it. That scheme wants two to carry it out: she has no courage. I feel that I could carry the day with my uncle, but I can't subject her to the risks, since she dreads them; I see it. Yes, I see that! I should have done well, I believe; I should have saved her.'

'Run to England, get your uncle's consent, and then try.'

'No; I shall go to her father.'

'My dear Nevil, and supposing you have Renée to back you—supposing it, I say—won't you be falling on exactly the same bayonet-point?'

'If I leave her!' Beauchamp interjected. He perceived the quality of Renée's unformed character which he could not express.

'But we are to suppose that she loves you?'

'She is a girl.'

'You return, my friend, to the place you started from, as you did on the canal without knowing it. In my opinion, frankly, she is best married. And I think so all the more after this morning's lesson. You understand plainly that if you leave her she will soon be pliant to the legitimate authorities; and why not?'

'Listen to me, Roland. I tell you she loves me. I am bound to her, and when—if ever I see her unhappy, I will not stand by and look on quietly.'

Roland shrugged. 'The future not being born, my friend, we will abstain from baptizing it. For me, less privileged than my fellows, I have never seen the future. Consequently I am not in love with it, and to declare myself candidly I do not care for it one snap of the fingers. Let us follow our usages, and attend to the future at the hour of its delivery. I prefer the sage-femme to the

prophet. From my heart, Nevil, I wish I could help you. We have charged great guns together, but a family arrangement is something different from a hostile battery. There 's Venice! and, as soon as you land, my responsibility's ended. Reflect, I pray you, on what I have said about girls. Upon my word, I discover myself talking wisdom to you. Girls are precious fragilities. Marriage is the mould for them; they get shape, substance, solidity: that is to say, sense, passion, a will of their own: and grace and tenderness, delicacy; all out of the rude, raw, quaking creatures we call girls. Paris! my dear Nevil. Paris! It 's the book of women.'

The grandeur of the decayed sea-city, where folly had danced Parisianly of old, spread brooding along the waters in morning light; beautiful; but with that inner light of history seen through the beauty Venice was like a lowered banner. The great white dome and the campanili watching above her were still brave emblems. Would Paris leave signs of an ancient vigour standing to vindicate dignity when her fall came? Nevil thought of Renée in Paris.

She avoided him. She had retired behind her tent-curtains, and reappeared only when her father's voice hailed the boat from a gondola. The count and the marquis were sitting together, and there was a spare gondola for the voyagers, so that they should not have to encounter another babel of the riva. Salutes were performed with lifted hats, nods, and bows.

'Well, my dear child, it has all been very wonderful and uncomfortable?' said the count.

'Wonderful, papa; splendid.'

'No qualms of any kind?'

'None, I assure you.'

'And madame?'

'Madame will confirm it, if you find a seat for her.'

Rosamund Culling was received in the count's gondola, cordially thanked, and placed beside the marquis.

'I stay on board and pay these fellows,' said Roland.

Renée was told by her father to follow madame. He had jumped into the spare gondola and offered a seat to Beauchamp.

'No,' cried Renée, arresting Beauchamp, 'it is I who mean to sit with papa.'

Up sprang the marquis with an entreating, 'Mademoiselle!'

'M. Beauchamp will entertain you, M. le Marquis.'

'I want him here,' said the count; and Beauchamp showed that his wish was to enter the count's gondola, but Renée had recovered her aplomb, and decisively said 'No,' and Beauchamp had to yield.

That would have been an opportunity of speaking to her father without a formal asking of leave. She knew it as well as Nevil Beauchamp.

Renée took his hand to be assisted in the step down to her father's arms, murmuring:

'Do nothing—nothing! until you hear from me.'

CHAPTER XI

CAPTAIN BASKELETT

Our England, meanwhile, was bustling over the extinguished war, counting the cost of it, with a rather rueful eye on Manchester, and soothing the taxed by an exhibition of heroes at brilliant feasts. Of course, the first to come home had the cream of the praises. She hugged them in a manner somewhat suffocating to modest men, but heroism must be brought to bear upon these excesses

of maternal admiration; modesty, too, when it accepts the place of honour at a public banquet, should not protest overmuch. To be just, the earliest arrivals, which were such as reached the shores of Albion before her war was at an end, did cordially reciprocate the hug. They were taught, and they believed most naturally, that it was quite as well to repose upon her bosom as to have stuck to their posts. Surely there was a conscious weakness in the Spartans, who were always at pains to discipline their men in heroical conduct, and rewarded none save the stand-fasts. A system of that sort seems to betray the sense of poverty in the article. Our England does nothing like it. All are welcome home to her so long as she is in want of them. Besides, she has to please the taxpayer. You may track a shadowy line or crazy zigzag of policy in almost every stroke of her domestic history: either it is the forethought finding it necessary to stir up an impulse, or else dashing impulse gives a lively pull to the afterthought: policy becomes evident somehow, clumsily very possibly. How can she manage an enormous middle-class, to keep it happy, other than a little clumsily? The managing of it at all is the wonder. And not only has she to stupefy the taxpayer by a timely display of feastings and fireworks, she has to stop all that nonsense (to quote a satiated man lightened in his purse) at the right moment, about the hour when the old stand-fasts, who have simply been doing duty, return, poor jog-trot fellows, and a complimentary motto or two is the utmost she can present to them. On the other hand, it is true she gives her first loves, those early birds, fully to understand that a change has come in their island mother's mind. If there is a balance to be righted, she leaves that business to society, and if it be the season for the gathering of society, it will be righted more or less; and if no righting is done at all, perhaps the Press will

incidentally toss a leaf of laurel on a name or two: thus in the exercise of grumbling doing good.

With few exceptions, Nevil Beauchamp's heroes received the motto instead of the sweetmeat. England expected them to do their duty; they did it, and she was not dissatisfied,—nor should they be. Beauchamp, at a distance from the scene, chafed with customary vehemence, concerning the unjust measure dealt to his favourites: Captain Hardist, of the Diomed, twenty years a captain, still a captain! Young Michell denied the cross! Colonel Evans Cuff, on the heights from first to last, and not advanced a step! But Prancer, and Plunger, and Lammakin were thoroughly *well taken care of*, this critic of the war wrote savagely, reviving an echo of a queer small circumstance occurring in the midst of the high dolour and anxiety of the whole nation, and which a politic country preferred to forget, as we will do, for it was but an instance of strong family feeling in high quarters; and is not the unity of the country founded on the integrity of the family sentiment? Is it not certain, which the master tells us, that a line is but a continuation of a number of dots? Nevil Beauchamp was for insisting that great Government officers had paid more attention to a dot or two than to the line. He appeared to be at war with his country after the peace. So far he had a lively ally in his uncle Everard; but these remarks of his were a portion of a letter, whose chief burden was the request that Everard Romfrey would back him in proposing for the hand of a young French lady, she being, Beauchamp smoothly acknowledged, engaged to a wealthy French marquis, under the approbation of her family. Could mortal folly outstrip a petition of that sort? And apparently, according to the wording and emphasis of the letter, it was the mature age of the marquis which made Mr. Beauchamp so par-

ticularly desirous to stop the projected marriage and take the girl himself. He appealed to his uncle on the subject in a 'really-really' remonstrative tone, quite overwhelming to read.—'It ought not to be permitted: by all the laws of chivalry, I should write to the girl's father to interdict it: I really am particeps criminis in a sin against nature if I don't!' Mr. Romfrey interjected in burlesque of his ridiculous nephew, with collapsing laughter. But he expressed an indignant surprise at Nevil for allowing Rosamund to travel alone.

'I can take very good care of myself,' Rosamund protested.

'You can do hundreds of things you should never be obliged to do while he 's at hand, or I, ma'am,' said Mr. Romfrey. 'The fellow 's insane. He forgets a gentleman's duty. Here 's his "humanity" dogging a French frock, and pooh!—the age of the marquis! Fifty? A man 's beginning his prime at fifty, or there never was much man in him. It 's the mark of a fool to take everybody for a bigger fool than himself—or he wouldn't have written this letter to me. He can't come home yet, not yet, and he doesn't know when he can! Has he thrown up the service? I am to preserve the alliance between England and France by getting this French girl for him in the teeth of her marquis, at my peril if I refuse!'

Rosamund asked, 'Will you let me see where Nevil says that, sir?'

Mr. Romfrey tore the letter to strips. 'He 's one of your fellows who cock their eyes when they mean to be cunning. He sends you to do the wheedling, that 's plain. I don't say he has hit on a bad advocate; but tell him I back him in no mortal marriage till he shows a pair of epaulettes on his shoulders. Tell him lieutenants are fledglings—he 's not marriageable at present. It 's a very pretty sacrifice of himself he intends for the sake of

the alliance, tell him that, but a lieutenant 's not quite big enough to establish it. You will know what to tell him, ma'am. And say, it 's the fellow's best friend that advises him to be out of it and home quick. If he makes one of a French trio, he 's dished. He 's too late for his luck in England. Have him out of that mire, we can't hope for more now.'

Rosamund postponed her mission to plead. Her heart was with Nevil; her understanding was easily led to side against him, and for better reasons than Mr. Romfrey could be aware of: so she was assured by her experience of the character of Mademoiselle de Croisnel. A certain belief in her personal arts of persuasion had stopped her from writing on her homeward journey to inform him that Nevil was not accompanying her, and when she drove over Steynham Common, triumphal arches and the odour of a roasting ox richly browning to celebrate the hero's return afflicted her mind with all the solid arguments of a common-sense country in contravention of a wild lover's vaporous extravagances. Why had he not come with her? The disappointed ox put the question in a wavering drop of the cheers of the villagers at the sight of the carriage without their bleeding hero. Mr. Romfrey, at his hall-doors, merely screwed his eyebrows; for it was the quality of this gentleman to foresee most human events, and his capacity to stifle astonishment when they trifled with his prognostics. Rosamund had left Nevil fast bound in the meshes of the young French sorceress, no longer leading, but submissively following, expecting blindly, seeing strange new virtues in the lurid indication of what appeared to border on the reverse. How could she plead for her infatuated darling to one who was common sense in person?

Everard's pointed interrogations reduced her to speak defensively, instead of attacking and claiming his aid for

the poor enamoured young man. She dared not say that Nevil continued to be absent because he was now encouraged by the girl to remain in attendance on her, and was more than half inspired to hope, and too artfully assisted to deceive the count and the marquis under the guise of simple friendship. Letters passed between them in books given into one another's hands with an audacious openness of the saddest augury for the future of the pair, and Nevil could be so lost to reason as to glory in Renée's intrepidity, which he justified by their mutual situation, and cherished for a proof that she was getting courage. In fine, Rosamund abandoned her task of pleading. Nevil's communications gave the case a worse and worse aspect: Renée was prepared to speak to her father; she delayed it; then the two were to part; they were unable to perform the terrible sacrifice and slay their last hope; and then Nevil wrote of destiny—language hitherto unknown to him, evidently the tongue of Renée. He slipped on from Italy to France. His uncle was besieged by a series of letters, and his cousin, Cecil Baskelett, a captain in England's grand reserve force—her Horse Guards, of the Blue division—helped Everard Romfrey to laugh over them.

It was not difficult, alack! Letters of a lover in an extremity of love, crying for help, are as curious to cool strong men as the contortions of the proved heterodox tied to a stake must have been to their chastening ecclesiastical judges. Why go to the fire when a recantation will save you from it? Why not break the excruciating faggot-bands, and escape, when you have only to decide to do it? We naturally ask why. Those martyrs of love or religion are madmen. Altogether, Nevil's adjurations and supplications, his threats of wrath and appeals to reason, were an odd mixture. 'He won't lose a chance while there 's breath in his body,' Everard said,

quite good-humouredly, though he deplored that the chance for the fellow to make his hero-parade in society, and haply catch an heiress, was waning. There was an heiress at Steynham, on her way with her father to Italy, very anxious to see her old friend Nevil—Cecilia Halkett: and very inquisitive this young lady of sixteen was to know the cause of his absence. She heard of it from Cecil.

'And one morning last week mademoiselle was running away with him, and the next morning she was married to her marquis!'

Cecil was able to tell her that.

'I used to be so fond of him,' said the ingenuous young lady. She had to thank Nevil for a Circassian dress and pearls, which he had sent to her by the hands of Mrs. Culling—a pretty present to a girl in the nursery, she thought, and in fact she chose to be a little wounded by the cause of his absence.

'He 's a good creature—really,' Cecil spoke on his cousin's behalf. 'Mad; he always will be mad. A dear old savage; always amuses me. He does! I get half my entertainment from him.'

Captain Baskelett was gifted with the art, which is a fine and a precious one, of priceless value in society, and not wanting a benediction upon it in our elegant literature, namely, the art of stripping his fellow-man and so posturing him as to make every movement of the comical wretch puppet-like, constrained, stiff, and foolish. He could present you heroical actions in that fashion; for example:

'A long-shanked trooper, bearing the name of John Thomas Drew, was crawling along under fire of the batteries. Out pops old Nevil, tries to get the man on his back. It won't do. Nevil insists that it 's exactly one of the cases that ought to be, and they remain arguing

about it like a pair of nine-pins while the Muscovites are at work with the bowls. Very well. Let me tell you my story. It 's perfectly true, I give you my word. So Nevil tries to horse Drew, and Drew proposes to horse Nevil, as at school. Then Drew offers a compromise. He would much rather have crawled on, you know, and allowed the shot to pass over his head; but he 's a Briton, old Nevil the same; but old Nevil's peculiarity is that, as you are aware, he hates a compromise—won't have it —retro Sathanas! and Drew's proposal to take his arm instead of being carried pickaback disgusts old Nevil. Still it won't do to stop where they are, like the cocoa-nut and the pincushion of our friends, the gipsies, on the downs: so they take arms and commence the journey home, resembling the best of friends on the evening of a holiday in our native clime—two steps to the right, half-a-dozen to the left, etcætera.'

Thus, with scarce a variation from the facts, with but a flowery chaplet cast on a truthful narrative, as it were, Captain Baskelett could render ludicrous that which in other quarters had obtained honourable mention. Nevil and Drew being knocked down by the wind of a ball near the battery, 'Confound it!' cries Nevil, jumping on his feet, 'it 's because I consented to a compromise!' —a transparent piece of fiction this, but so in harmony with the character stripped naked for us that it is accepted. Imagine Nevil's love-affair in such hands! Recovering from a fever, Nevil sees a pretty French girl in a gondola, and immediately thinks, 'By jingo, I 'm marriageable.' He hears she is engaged. 'By jingo, she 's marriageable too.' He goes through a sum in addition, and the total is a couple; so he determines on a marriage. 'You can't get it out of his head; he must be married instantly, and to her, because she is going to marry somebody else. Sticks to her, follows her, will have her, in spite of her

father, her marquis, her brother, aunts, cousins, religion, country, and the young woman herself. I assure you, a perfect model of male fidelity! She is married. He is on her track. He knows his time will come; he has only to be handy. You see, old Nevil believes in Providence, is perfectly sure he will one day hear it cry out, "Where 's Beauchamp?" "Here I am!" "And here 's your marquise!" "I knew I should have her at last," says Nevil, calm as Mont Blanc on a reduced scale.'

The secret of Captain Baskelett's art would seem to be to show the automatic human creature at loggerheads with a necessity that winks at remarkable pretensions, while condemning it perpetually to doll-like action. You look on men from your own elevation as upon a quantity of our little wooden images, unto whom you affix puny characteristics, under restrictions from which they shall not escape, though they attempt it with the enterprising vigour of an extended leg, or a pair of raised arms, or a head awry, or a trick of jumping; and some of them are extraordinarily addicted to these feats; but for all they do the end is the same, for necessity rules, that exactly so, under stress of activity must the doll Nevil, the doll Everard, or the dolliest of dolls, fair woman, behave. The automatic creature is subject to the laws of its construction, you perceive. It can this, it can that, but it cannot leap out of its mechanism. One definition of the art is, humour made easy, and that may be why Cecil Baskelett indulged in it, and why it is popular with those whose humour consists of a readiness to laugh.

The fun between Cecil Baskelett and Mr. Romfrey over the doll Nevil threatened an intimacy and community of sentiment that alarmed Rosamund on behalf of her darling's material prospects. She wrote to him, entreating him to come to Steynham. Nevil Beauchamp replied to her both frankly and shrewdly: 'I shall not

pretend that I forgive my uncle Everard, and therefore it is best for me to keep away. Have no fear. The baron likes a man of his own tastes: they may laugh together, if it suits them; he never could be guilty of treachery, and to disinherit me would be that. If I were to become his open enemy to-morrow, I should look on the estates as mine—unless I did anything to make him disrespect me. You will not suppose it likely. I foresee I shall want money. As for Cecil, I give him as much rope as he cares to have. I know very well Everard Romfrey will see where the point of likeness between them stops. I apply for a ship the moment I land.'

To test Nevil's judgement of his uncle, Rosamund ventured on showing this letter to Mr. Romfrey. He read it, and said nothing, but subsequently asked, from time to time, 'Has he got his ship yet?' It assured her that Nevil was not wrong, and dispelled her notion of the vulgar imbroglio of a rich uncle and two thirsty nephews. She was hardly less relieved in reflecting that he could read men so soberly and accurately. The desperation of the youth in love had rendered her one little bit doubtful of the orderliness of his wits. After this she smiled on Cecil's assiduities. Nevil obtained his appointment to a ship bound for the coast of Africa to spy for slavers. He called on his uncle in London, and spent the greater part of the hour's visit with Rosamund; seemed cured of his passion, devoid of rancour, glad of the prospect of a run among the slaving hulls. He and his uncle shook hands manfully, at the full outstretch of their arms, in a way so like them, to Rosamund's thinking—that is, in a way so unlike any other possible couple of men so situated—that the humour of the sight eclipsed all the pleasantries of Captain Baskelett. 'Good-bye, sir,' Nevil said heartily; and Everard Romfrey was not

behind-hand with the cordial ring of his 'Good-bye, Nevil'; and upon that they separated. Rosamund would have been willing to speak to her beloved of his false Renée—the Frenchwoman, she termed her, *i.e.* generically false, needless to name; and one question quivered on her tongue's tip: 'How, when she had promised to fly with you, *how could she* the very next day step to the altar with him now her husband?' And, if she had spoken it, she would have added, 'Your uncle could not have set his face against you, had you brought her to England.' She felt strongly the mastery Nevil Beauchamp could exercise even over his uncle Everard. But when he was gone, unquestioned, merely caressed, it came to her mind that he had all through insisted on his possession of this particular power, and she accused herself of having wantonly helped to ruin his hope—a matter to be rejoiced at in the abstract; but what suffering she had inflicted on him! To quiet her heart, she persuaded herself that for the future she would never fail to believe in him and second him blindly, as true love should; and contemplating one so brave, far-sighted, and self-assured, her determination seemed to impose the lightest of tasks.

Practically humane though he was, and especially toward cattle and all kinds of beasts, Mr. Romfrey entertained no profound fellow-feeling for the negro, and, except as the representative of a certain amount of working power commonly requiring the whip to wind it up, he inclined to despise that black spot in the creation, with which our civilization should never have had anything to do. So he pronounced his mind, and the long habit of listening to oracles might grow us ears to hear and discover a meaning in it. Nevil's captures and releases of the grinning freights amused him for awhile. He compared them to strings of bananas, and presently put the

vision of the whole business aside by talking of Nevil's banana-wreath. He desired to have Nevil out of it. He and Cecil handed Nevil in his banana-wreath about to their friends. Nevil, in his banana-wreath, was set preaching 'humanitomtity.' At any rate, they contrived to keep the remembrance of Nevil Beauchamp alive during the period of his disappearance from the world, and in so doing they did him a service.

There is a pause between the descent of a diver and his return to the surface, when those who would not have him forgotten by the better world above him do rightly to relate anecdotes of him, if they can, and to provoke laughter at him. The encouragement of the humane sense of superiority over an object of interest, which laughter gives, is good for the object; and besides, if you begin to tell sly stories of one in the deeps who is holding his breath to fetch a pearl or two for you all, you divert a particular sympathetic oppression of the chest, that the extremely sensitive are apt to suffer from, and you dispose the larger number to keep in mind a person they no longer see. Otherwise it is likely that he will, very shortly after he has made his plunge, fatigue the contemplative brains above, and be shuffled off them, even as great ocean smoothes away the dear vanished man's immediate circle of foam, and rapidly confounds the rippling memory of him with its other agitations. And in such a case the apparition of his head upon our common level once more will almost certainly cause a disagreeable shock; nor is it improbable that his first natural snorts in his native element, though they be simply to obtain his share of the breath of life, will draw down on him condemnation for eccentric behaviour and unmannerly; and this in spite of the jewel he brings, unless it be an exceedingly splendid one.

The reason is, that our brave world cannot pardon a breach of continuity for any petty bribe.

Thus it chanced, owing to the prolonged efforts of Mr. Romfrey and Cecil Baskelett to get fun out of him, at the cost of considerable inventiveness, that the electoral Address of the candidate, signing himself 'R. C. S. Nevil Beauchamp,' to the borough of Bevisham, did not issue from an altogether unremembered man.

He had been cruising in the Mediterranean, commanding the *Ariadne*, the smartest corvette in the service. He had, it was widely made known, met his marquise in Palermo. It was presumed that he was dancing the round with her still, when this amazing Address appeared on Bevisham's walls, in anticipation of the general Election. The Address, moreover, was ultra-Radical: museums to be opened on Sundays; ominous references to the Land question, etc.; no smooth passing mention of Reform, such as the Liberal, become stately, adopts in speaking of that property of his, but swinging blows on the heads of many a denounced iniquity.

Cecil forwarded the Address to Everard Romfrey without comment.

Next day the following letter, dated from Itchincope, the house of Mr. Grancey Lespel, on the borders of Bevisham, arrived at Steynham:—

'I have despatched you the proclamation, folded neatly. The electors of Bevisham are summoned, like a town at the sword's point, to yield him their votes. Proclamation is the word. I am your born representative! I have completed my political education on salt water, and I tackle you on the Land question. I am the heir of your votes, gentlemen!—I forgot, and I apologize; he calls them fellow-men. Fraternal, and not so risky. Here at Lespel's we read the thing with shouts. It hangs in the smoking-room. We throw

open the curaçoa to the intelligence and industry of the assembled guests; we carry the right of the multitude to our host's cigars by a majority. C'est un farceur que notre bon petit cousin. Lespel says it is sailorlike to do something of this sort after a cruise. Nevil's Radicalism would have been clever anywhere out of Bevisham. Of all boroughs! Grancey Lespel knows it. He and his family were Bevisham's Whig M.P.'s before the day of Manchester. In Bevisham an election is an arrangement made by Providence to square the accounts of the voters, and settle arrears. They reckon up the health of their two members and the chances of an appeal to the country when they fix the rents and leases. You have them pointed out to you in the street, with their figures attached to them like titles. Mr. Tomkins, the twenty-pound man; an elector of uncommon purity. I saw the ruffian yesterday. He has an extra breadth to his hat. He has never been known to listen to a member under £20, and is respected enormously—like the lady of the Mythology, who was an intolerable Tartar of virtue, because her price was nothing less than a god, and money down. Nevil will have to come down on Bevisham in the Jupiter style. Bevisham is downright the dearest of boroughs—"vaulting-boards," as Stukely Culbrett calls them—in the kingdom. I assume we still say "kingdom."

'He dashed into the Radical trap exactly two hours after landing. I believe he was on his way to the Halketts at Mount Laurels. A notorious old rascal revolutionist retired from his licenced business of slaughterer—one of your *gratis* doctors—met him on the high-road, and told him he was the man. Up went Nevil's enthusiasm like a bottle rid of the cork. You will see a great deal about faith in the proclamation; "faith in the future," and "my faith in you." When you become a Radical you

have faith in any quantity, just as an alderman gets turtle soup. It is your badge, like a livery-servant's cockade or a corporal's sleeve stripes—your badge and your bellyful. Calculations were gone through at the Liberal newspaper-office, old Nevil adding up hard, and he was informed that he was elected by something like a topping eight or nine hundred and some fractions. I am sure that a fellow who can let himself be gulled by a pile of figures trumped up in a Radical newspaper-office must have great faith in the fractions. Out came Nevil's proclamation.

'I have not met him, and I would rather not. I shall not pretend to offer you advice, for I have the habit of thinking your judgement can stand by itself. We shall all find this affair a nuisance. Nevil will pay through the nose. We shall have the ridicule spattered on the family. It would be a safer thing for him to invest his money on the Turf, and I shall advise his doing it if I come across him.

'Perhaps the best course would be to telegraph for the marquise!'

This was from Cecil Baskelett. He added a post-script—

'Seriously, the "mad commander" has not an ace of a chance. Grancey and I saw some Working Men (you have to write them in capitals, king and queen small); they were reading the Address on a board carried by a red-nosed man, and shrugging. They are not such fools.

'By the way, I am informed Shrapnel has a young female relative living with him, said to be a sparkler. I bet you, sir, she is not a Radical. Do you take me?'

Rosamund Culling drove to the railway station on her way to Bevisham within an hour after Mr. Romfrey's eyebrows had made acute play over this communication.

CHAPTER XII

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE INFAMOUS DR. SHRAPNEL

In the High street of the ancient and famous town and port of Bevisham, Rosamund met the military governor of a neighbouring fortress, General Sherwin, once colonel of her husband's regiment in India; and by him, as it happened, she was assisted in finding the whereabout of the young Liberal candidate, without the degrading recourse of an application at the newspaper-office of his party. The General was leisurely walking to a place of appointment to fetch his daughter home from a visit to an old school-friend, a Miss Jenny Denham, no other than a ward, or a niece, or an adoption of Dr. Shrapnel's: 'A nice girl; a great favourite of mine,' the General said. Shrapnel he knew by reputation only as a wrong-headed politician; but he spoke of Miss Denham pleasantly two or three times, praising her accomplishments and her winning manners. His hearer suspected that it might be done to dissociate the idea of her from the ruffling agitator. 'Is she pretty?' was a question that sprang from Rosamund's intimate reflections. The answer was, 'Yes.'

'Very pretty?'

'I think very pretty,' said the General.

'Captivatingly?'

'Clara thinks she is perfect; she is tall and slim, and dresses well. The girls were with a French Madam in Paris. But, if you are interested about her, you can come on with me, and we shall meet them somewhere near the head of the street. I don't,' the General hesitated and hummed—'I don't call at Shrapnel's.'

'I have never heard her name before to-day,' said Rosamund.

'Exactly,' said the General, crowing at the aimlessness of a woman's curiosity.

The young ladies were seen approaching, and Rosamund had to ask herself whether the first sight of a person like Miss Denham would be of a kind to exercise a lively influence over the political and other sentiments of a dreamy sailor just released from ship-service. In an ordinary case she would have said no, for Nevil enjoyed a range of society where faces charming as Miss Denham's were plentiful as roses in the rose-garden. But, supposing him free of his bondage to the foreign woman, there was, she thought and feared, a possibility that a girl of this description might capture a young man's vacant heart sighing for a new mistress. And if so, further observation assured her Miss Denham was likely to be dangerous far more than professedly attractive persons, enchantresses and the rest. Rosamund watchfully gathered all the superficial indications which incite women to judge of character profoundly. This new object of alarm was, as the General had said of her, tall and slim, a friend of neatness, plainly dressed, but exquisitely fitted, in the manner of Frenchwomen. She spoke very readily, not too much, and had the rare gift of being able to speak fluently with a smile on the mouth. Vulgar archness imitates it. She won and retained the eyes of her hearer sympathetically, it seemed. Rosamund thought her as little conscious as a woman could be. She coloured at times quickly, but without confusion. When that name, the key of Rosamund's meditations, chanced to be mentioned, a flush swept over Miss Denham's face. The candour of it was unchanged as she gazed at Rosamund, with a look that asked, 'Do you know him?'

Rosamund said, 'I am an old friend of his.'

'He is here now, in this town.'

'I wish to see him very much.'

General Sherwin interposed: 'We won't talk about political characters just for the present.'

'I wish you knew him, papa, and would advise him,' his daughter said.

The General nodded hastily. 'By-and-by, by-and-by.'

They had in fact taken seats at a table of mutton pies in a pastrycook's shop, where dashing military men were restrained solely by their presence from a too noisy display of fascinations before the fashionable waiting-women.

Rosamund looked at Miss Denham. As soon as they were in the street the latter said, 'If you will be good enough to come with me, madam . . .?'

Rosamund bowed, thankful to have been comprehended. The two young ladies kissed cheeks and parted. General Sherwin raised his hat, and was astonished to see Mrs. Culling join Miss Denham in accepting the salute, for they had not been introduced, and what could they have in common? It was another of the oddities of female nature.

'My name is Mrs. Culling, and I will tell you how it is that I am interested in Captain Beauchamp,' Rosamund addressed her companion. 'I am his uncle's housekeeper. I have known him and loved him since he was a boy. I am in great fear that he is acting rashly.'

'You honour me, madam, by speaking to me so frankly,' Miss Denham answered.

'He is quite bent upon this Election?'

'Yes, madam. I am not, as you can suppose, in his confidence, but I hear of him from Dr. Shrapnel.'

'Your uncle?'

'I call him uncle: he is my guardian, madam.'

It is perhaps excuseable that this communication did

not cause the doctor to shine with added lustre in Rosamund's thoughts, or ennoble the young lady.

'You are not relatives, then?' she said.

'No, unless love can make us so.'

'Not blood-relatives?'

'No.'

'Is he not very . . . extreme?'

'He is very sincere.'

'I presume you are a politician?'

Miss Denham smiled. 'Could you pardon me, madam, if I said that I was?'

The counterquestion was a fair retort enfolding a gentler irony. Rosamund felt that she had to do with wits as well as with vivid feminine intuitions in the person of this Miss Denham.

She said, 'I really am of opinion that our sex might abstain from politics.'

'We find it difficult to do justice to both parties,' Miss Denham followed. 'It seems to be a kind of clanship with women; hardly even that.'

Rosamund was inattentive to the conversational slipshod, and launched one of the heavy affirmatives which are in dialogue full stops. She could not have said why she was sensible of anger, but the sentiment of anger, or spite (if that be a lesser degree of the same affliction), became stirred in her bosom when she listened to the ward of Dr. Shrapnel. A silly pretty puss of a girl would not have excited it, nor an avowed blood-relative of the demagogue.

Nevil's hotel was pointed out to Rosamund, and she left her card there. He had been absent since eight in the morning. There was the probability that he might be at Dr. Shrapnel's, so Rosamund walked on.

'Captain Beauchamp gives himself no rest,' Miss Denham said.

'Oh! I know him, when once his mind is set on anything,' said Rosamund. 'Is it not too early to begin to —canvass, I think, is the word?'

'He is studying whatever the town can teach him of its wants; that is, how he may serve it.'

'Indeed! But if the town will not have him to serve it?'

'He imagines that he cannot do better, until that has been decided, than to fit himself for the post.'

'Acting upon your advice? I mean, of course, your uncle's; that is, Dr. Shrapnel's.'

'Dr. Shrapnel thinks it will not be loss of time for Captain Beauchamp to grow familiar with the place, and observe as well as read.'

'It sounds almost as if Captain Beauchamp had submitted to be Dr. Shrapnel's pupil.'

'It is natural, madam, that Dr. Shrapnel should know more of political ways at present than Captain Beauchamp.'

'To Captain Beauchamp's friends and relatives it appears very strange that he should have decided to contest this election so suddenly. May I inquire whether he and Dr. Shrapnel are old acquaintances?'

'No, madam, they are not. They had never met before Captain Beauchamp landed, the other day.'

'I am surprised, I confess. I cannot understand the nature of an influence that induces him to abandon a profession he loves and shines in, for politics, at a moment's notice.'

Miss Denham was silent, and then said:

'I will tell you, madam, how it occurred, as far as circumstances explain it. Dr. Shrapnel is accustomed to give a little country feast to the children I teach, and their parents if they choose to come, and they generally do. They are driven to Northeden Heath, where we set up a

booth for them, and try with cakes and tea and games to make them spend one of their happy afternoons and evenings. We succeed, I know, for the little creatures talk of it and look forward to the day. When they are at their last romp, Dr. Shrapnel speaks to the parents.'

'Can he obtain a hearing?' Rosamund asked.

'He has not so very large a crowd to address, madam, and he is much beloved by those that come.'

'He speaks to them of politics on those occasions?'

'*Adouci a leur intention.* It is not a political speech, but Dr. Shrapnel thinks, that in a so-called free country seeking to be really free, men of the lowest class should be educated in forming a political judgement.'

'And women too?'

'And women, yes. Indeed, madam, we notice that the women listen very creditably.'

'They can put on the air.'

'I am afraid, not more than the men do. To get them to listen is something. They suffer like the men, and must depend on their intelligence to win their way out of it.'

Rosamund's meditation was exclamatory: What can be the age of this pretentious girl?

An afterthought turned her more conciliatorily toward the person, but less to the subject. She was sure that she was lending ear to the echo of the dangerous doctor, and rather pitied Miss Denham for awhile, reflecting that a young woman stuffed with such ideas would find it hard to get a husband. Mention of Nevil revived her feeling of hostility.

'We had seen a gentleman standing near and listening attentively,' Miss Denham resumed, 'and when Dr. Shrapnel concluded a card was handed to him. He read it and gave it to me, and said, "You know that name." It was a name we had often talked about during the war.

He went to Captain Beauchamp and shook his hand. He does not pay many compliments, and he does not like to receive them, but it was impossible for him not to be moved by Captain Beauchamp's warmth in thanking him for the words he had spoken. I saw that Dr. Shrapnel became interested in Captain Beauchamp the longer they conversed. We walked home together. Captain Beauchamp supped with us. I left them at half-past eleven at night, and in the morning I found them walking in the garden. They had not gone to bed at all. Captain Beauchamp has remained in Bevisham ever since. He soon came to the decision to be a candidate for the borough.'

Rosamund checked her lips from uttering: To be a puppet of Dr. Shrapnel's!

She remarked, 'He is very eloquent—Dr. Shrapnel?'

Miss Denham held some debate with herself upon the term.

'Perhaps it is not eloquence; he often . . . no, he is not an orator.'

Rosamund suggested that he was persuasive, possibly.

Again the young lady deliberately weighed the word, as though the nicest measure of her uncle or adoptor's quality in this or that direction were in requisition and of importance—an instance of a want of delicacy of perception Rosamund was not sorry to detect. For good-looking, refined-looking, quick-witted girls can be grown; but the nimble sense of fitness, ineffable lightning-footed tact, comes of race and breeding, and she was sure Nevil was a man soon to feel the absence of that.

'Dr. Shrapnel is persuasive to those who go partly with him, or whose condition of mind calls on him for great patience,' Miss Denham said at last.

'I am only trying to comprehend how it was that he

should so rapidly have won Captain Beauchamp to his views,' Rosamund explained; and the young lady did not reply.

Dr. Shrapnel's house was about a mile beyond the town, on a common of thorn and gorse, through which the fir-bordered highway ran. A fence waist-high enclosed its plot of meadow and garden, so that the doctor, while protecting his own, might see and be seen of the world, as was the case when Rosamund approached. He was pacing at long slow strides along the gravel walk, with his head bent and bare, and his hands behind his back, accompanied by a gentleman who could be no other than Nevil, Rosamund presumed to think; but drawing nearer she found she was mistaken.

'That is not Captain Beauchamp's figure,' she said.

'No, it is not he,' said Miss Denham.

Rosamund saw that her companion was pale. She warmed to her at once; by no means on account of the pallor in itself.

'I have walked too fast for you, I fear.'

'Oh no; I am accused of being a fast walker.'

Rosamund was unwilling to pass through the demagogue's gate. On second thoughts, she reflected that she could hardly stipulate to have news of Nevil tossed to her over the spikes, and she entered.

While receiving Dr. Shrapnel's welcome to a friend of Captain Beauchamp, she observed the greeting between Miss Denham and the younger gentleman. It reassured her. They met like two that have a secret.

The dreaded doctor was an immoderately tall man, lean and wiry, carelessly clad in a long loose coat of no colour, loose trowsers, and huge shoes.

He stooped from his height to speak, or rather swing the stiff upper half of his body down to his hearer's level and back again, like a ship's mast on a billowy sea. He

was neither rough nor abrupt, nor did he roar bull-mouthedly as demagogues are expected to do, though his voice was deep. He was actually, after his fashion, courteous, it could be said of him, except that his mind was too visibly possessed by distant matters for Rosamund's taste, she being accustomed to drawing-room and hunting and military gentlemen, who can be all in the words they utter. Nevertheless he came out of his lizard-like look with the down-dropped eyelids quick at a resumption of the dialogue; sometimes gesturing, sweeping his arm round. A stubborn tuft of iron-grey hair fell across his forehead, and it was apparently one of his life's labours to get it to lie amid the mass, for his hand rarely ceased to be in motion without an impulsive stroke at the refractory forelock. He peered through his eyelashes ordinarily, but from no infirmity of sight. The truth was, that the man's nature counteracted his spirit's intenser eagerness and restlessness by alternating a state of repose that resembled dormancy, and so preserved him. Rosamund was obliged to give him credit for straightforward eyes when they did look out and flash. Their filmy blue, half overflown with grey by age, was poignant while the fire in them lasted. Her antipathy attributed something electrical to the light they shot.

Dr. Shrapnel's account of Nevil stated him to have gone to call on Colonel Halkett, a new resident at Mount Laurels, on the Otley river. He offered the welcome of his house to the lady who was Captain Beauchamp's friend, saying, with extraordinary fatuity (so it sounded in Rosamund's ears), that Captain Beauchamp would certainly not let an evening pass without coming to him. Rosamund suggested that he might stay late at Mount Laurels.

'Then he will arrive here after nightfall,' said the doctor. 'A bed is at your service, ma'am.'

The offer was declined. 'I should like to have seen him to-day; but he will be home shortly.'

'He will not quit Bevisham till this Election 's decided unless to hunt a stray borough vote, ma'am.'

'He goes to Mount Laurels.'

'For that purpose.'

'I do not think he will persuade Colonel Halkett to vote in the Radical interest.'

'That is the probability with a landed proprietor, ma'am. We must knock, whether the door opens or not. Like,' the doctor laughed to himself up aloft, 'like a watchman in the night to say that he smells smoke on the premises.'

'Surely we may expect Captain Beauchamp to consult his family about so serious a step as this he is taking,' Rosamund said, with an effort to be civil.

'Why should he?' asked the impending doctor.

His head continued in the interrogative position when it had resumed its elevation. The challenge for a definite reply to so outrageous a question irritated Rosamund's nerves, and, loth though she was to admit him to the subject, she could not forbear from saying, 'Why? Surely his family have the first claim on him!'

'Surely not, ma'am. There is no first claim. A man's wife and children have a claim on him for bread. A man's parents have a claim on him for obedience while he is a child. A man's uncles, aunts, and cousins have no claim on him at all, except for help in necessity, which he can grant and they require. None—wife, children, parents, relatives—none has a claim to bar his judgement and his actions. Sound the conscience, and sink the family! With a clear conscience, it is best to leave the family to its own debates. No man ever did brave work who held counsel with his family. The family view of a man's fit conduct is the weak point of the country. It

is no other view than, "Better thy condition for our sakes." Ha! In this way we breed sheep, fatten oxen: men are dying off. Resolution taken, consult the family means—waste your time! Those who go to it want an excuse for altering their minds. The family view is everlastingly the shopkeeper's! Purse, pence, ease, increase of worldly goods, personal importance—the pound, the English pound! Dare do *that*, and you forfeit your share of Port wine in this world; you won't be dubbed with a title; you 'll be fingered at! Lord, Lord! is it the region inside a man, or out, that gives him peace? *Out*, they say; for they have lost faith in the existence of an inner. They haven't it. Air-sucker, blood-pump, cooking machinery, and a battery of trained instincts, aptitudes, fill up their vacuum. I repeat, ma'am, why should young Captain Beauchamp spend an hour consulting his family? They won't approve him; he knows it. They may annoy him; and what is the gain of that? They can't move him; on that I let my right hand burn. So it would be useless on both sides. He thinks so. So do I. He is one of the men to serve his country on the best field we can choose for him. In a ship 's cabin he is thrown away. Ay, ay, War, and he may go aboard. But now we must have him ashore. Too few of such as he!'

'It is matter of opinion,' said Rosamund, very tightly compressed; scarcely knowing what she said.

How strange, besides hateful, it was to her to hear her darling spoken of by a stranger who not only pretended to appreciate but to possess him! A stranger, a man of evil, with monstrous ideas! A terribly strong inexhaustible man, of a magical power too; or would he otherwise have won such a mastery over Nevil?

Of course she could have shot a rejoinder, to confute him with all the force of her indignation, save that the

words were tumbling about in her head like a world in disruption, which made her feel a weakness at the same time that she gloated on her capacity, as though she had an enormous army, quite overwhelming if it could but be got to move in advance. This very common condition of the silent-stricken, unused in dialectics, heightened Rosamund's disgust by causing her to suppose that Nevil had been similarly silenced, in his case vanquished, captured, ruined; and he dwindled in her estimation for a moment or two. She felt that among a sisterhood of gossips she would soon have found her voice, and struck down the demagogue's audacious sophisms: not that they affected her in the slightest degree for her own sake: Shrapnel might think what he liked, and say what he liked, as far as she was concerned, apart from the man she loved. Rosamund went through these emotions altogether on Nevil's behalf, and longed for her affirmatizing inspiring sisterhood until the thought of them threw another shade on him.

What champion was she to look to? To whom but to Mr. Everard Romfrey?

It was with a spasm of delighted reflection that she hit on Mr. Romfrey. He was like a discovery to her. With his strength and skill, his robust common sense and rough shrewd wit, his prompt comparisons, his chivalry, his love of combat, his old knightly blood, was not he a match, and an overmatch, for the ramping Radical who had tangled Nevil in his rough snares? She ran her mind over Mr. Romfrey's virtues, down even to his towering height and breadth. Could she but once draw these two giants into collision in Nevil's presence, she was sure it would save him. The method of doing it she did not stop to consider: she enjoyed her triumph in the idea.

Meantime she had passed from Dr. Shrapnel to Miss Denham, and carried on a conversation becomingly.

Tea had been made in the garden, and she had politely sipped half a cup, which involved no step inside the guilty house, and therefore no distress to her antagonism. The sun descended. She heard the doctor reciting. Could it be poetry? In her imagination the sombre hues surrounding an incendiary opposed that bright spirit. She listened, smiling incredulously. Miss Denham could interpret looks, and said, 'Dr. Shrapnel is very fond of those verses.'

Rosamund's astonishment caused her to say, 'Are they his own?'—a piece of satiric innocency at which Miss Denham laughed softly as she answered, 'No.'

Rosamund pleaded that she had not heard them with any distinctness.

'Are they written by the gentleman at his side?'

'Mr. Lydiard? No. He writes, but the verses are not his.'

'Does he know—has he met Captain Beauchamp?'

'Yes, once. Captain Beauchamp has taken a great liking to his works.'

Rosamund closed her eyes, feeling that she was in a nest that had determined to appropriate Nevil. But at any rate there was the hope and the probability that this Mr. Lydiard of the pen had taken a long start of Nevil in the heart of Miss Denham: and struggling to be candid, to ensure some meditative satisfaction, Rosamund admitted to herself that the girl did not appear to be one of the wanton giddy-pated pusses who play two gentlemen or more on their line. Appearances, however, could be deceptive: never pretend to know a girl by her face, was one of Rosamund's maxims.

She was next informed of Dr. Shrapnel's partiality for music toward the hour of sunset. Miss Denham mentioned it, and the doctor, presently sauntering up, invited Rosamund to a seat on a bench near the

open window of the drawing-room. He nodded to his ward to go in.

'I am a fire-worshipper, ma'am,' he said. 'The God of day is the father of poetry, medicine, music: our best friend. See him there! My Jenny will spin a thread from us to him over the millions of miles, with one touch of the chords, as quick as he shoots a beam on us. Ay! on her wretched tinkler called a piano, which tries at the whole orchestra and murders every instrument in the attempt. But it 's convenient, like our modern civilization —a taming and a diminishing of individuals for an insipid harmony!'

'You surely do not object to the organ?—I fear I cannot wait, though,' said Rosamund.

Miss Denham entreated her. 'Oh! do, madam. Not to hear me—I am not so perfect a player that I should wish it—but to see him. Captain Beauchamp may now be coming at any instant.'

Mr. Lydiard added, 'I have an appointment with him here for this evening.'

'You build a cathedral of sound in the organ,' said Dr. Shrapnel, casting out a league of leg as he sat beside his only half-persuaded fretful guest. 'You subject the winds to serve you; that 's a gain. You do actually accomplish a resonant imitation of the various instruments; they sing out as your two hands command them —trumpet, flute, dulcimer, hautboy, drum, storm, earthquake, ethereal quire; you have them at your option. But tell me of an organ in the open air? The sublimity would vanish, ma'am, both from the notes and from the structure, because accessories and circumstances produce its chief effects. Say that an organ is a despotism, just as your piano is the Constitutional bourgeois. Match them with the trained orchestral band of skilled individual performers, indoors or out, where each grasps his instrument,

and each relies on his fellow with confidence, and an unrivalled concord comes of it. That is our republic: each one to his work; all in union! There 's the motto for us! *Then* you have music, harmony, the highest, fullest, finest! Educate your men to form a band, you shame dexterous trickery and imitation sounds. *Then* for the difference of real instruments from clever shams! Oh, ay, *one* will set your organ going; that is, one in front, with his couple of panting air-pumpers behind—his ministers!' Dr. Shrapnel laughed at some undefined mental image, apparently careless of any laughing companionship. '*One* will do it for you, especially if he 's born to do it. Born!' A slap of the knee reported what seemed to be an immensely contemptuous sentiment. 'But free mouths blowing into brass and wood, ma'am, beat your bellows and your whifflers; your artificial choruses—crash, crash! your unanimous plebiscitums! Beat them? There 's no contest: we 're in another world; we 're in the sun's world,—yonder!'

Miss Denham's opening notes on the despised piano put a curb on the doctor. She began a Mass of Mozart's, without the usual preliminary rattle of the keys, as of a crier announcing a performance, straight to her task, for which Rosamund thanked her, liking that kind of composed simplicity: she thanked her more for cutting short the doctor's fanatical nonsense. It was perceptible to her that a species of mad metaphor had been wriggling and tearing its passage through a thorn-bush in his discourse, with the furious urgency of a sheep in a panic; but where the ostensible subject ended and the metaphor commenced, and which was which at the conclusion, she found it difficult to discern—much as the sheep would be when he had left his fleece behind him. She could now have said, 'Silly old man!'

Dr. Shrapnel appeared most placable. He was gazing

at his Authority in the heavens, tangled among gold clouds and purple; his head bent acutely on one side, and his eyes upturned in dim speculation. His great feet planted on their heels faced him, suggesting the stocks; his arms hung loose. Full many a hero of the alehouse, anciently amenable to leg-and-foot imprisonment in the grip of the parish, has presented as respectable an air. His forelock straggled as it willed.

Rosamund rose abruptly as soon as the terminating notes of the Mass had been struck.

Dr. Shrapnel seemed to be concluding his devotions before he followed her example.

'There, ma'am, you have a telegraphic system for the soul,' he said. 'It is harder work to travel from this place to this' (he pointed at ear and breast) 'than from here to yonder' (a similar indication traversed the distance between earth and sun). 'Man's aim has hitherto been to keep men from having a soul for *this* world: he takes it for something infernal. He?—I mean, they that hold power. They shudder to think the conservatism of the earth will be shaken by a change; they dread they won't get men with souls to fetch and carry, dig, root, mine, for them. Right!—what then? Digging and mining will be done; so will harping and singing. But *then* we have a natural optimacy! Then, on the one hand, we whip the man-beast and the man-sloth; on the other, we seize that old fatted iniquity—that tyrant! that tempter! that legitimated swindler cursed of Christ! that palpable Satan whose name is Capital!—by the neck, and have him disgorging within three gasps of his life. He is the villain! Let him live, for he too comes of blood and bone. He shall not grind the faces of the poor and helpless—that 's all.'

The comicality of her having such remarks addressed to her provoked a smile on Rosamund's lips.

'Don't go at him like Samson blind,' said Mr. Lydiard; and Miss Denham, who had returned, begged her guardian to entreat the guest to stay.

She said in an undertone, 'I am very anxious you should see Captain Beauchamp, madam.'

'I too; but he will write, and I really can wait no longer,' Rosamund replied, in extreme apprehension lest a certain degree of pressure should overbear her repugnance to the doctor's dinner-table. Miss Denham's look was fixed on her; but, whatever it might mean, Rosamund's endurance was at an end. She was invited to dine; she refused. She was exceedingly glad to find herself on the high-road again, with a prospect of reaching Steynham that night; for it was important that she should not have to confess a visit to Bevisham now when she had so little of favourable to tell Mr. Everard Romfrey of his chosen nephew. Whether she had acted quite wisely in not remaining to see Nevil, was an agitating question that had to be silenced by an appeal to her instincts of repulsion, and a further appeal for justification of them to her imaginary sisterhood of gossips. How could she sit and eat, how pass an evening in that house, in the society of that man? Her tuneful chorus cried, 'How indeed.' Besides, it would have offended Mr. Romfrey to hear that she had done so. Still she could not refuse to remember Miss Denham's marked intimations of there being a reason for Nevil's friend to seize the chance of an immediate interview with him; and in her distress at the thought, Rosamund reluctantly, but as if compelled by necessity, ascribed the young lady's conduct to a strong sense of personal interests.

'Evidently *she* has no desire he should run the risk of angering a rich uncle.'

This shameful suspicion was unavoidable: there was

no other opiate for Rosamund's blame of herself after letting her instincts gain the ascendancy.

It will be found a common case, that when we have yielded to our instincts, and then have to soothe conscience, we must slaughter somebody, for a sacrificial offering to our sense of comfort.

CHAPTER XIII

A SUPERFINE CONSCIENCE

However much Mr. Everard Romfrey may have laughed at Nevil Beauchamp with his 'banana-wreath,' he liked the fellow for having volunteered for that African coast-service, and the news of his promotion by his admiral to the post of commander through a death vacancy, had given him an exalted satisfaction, for as he could always point to the cause of failures, he strongly appreciated success. The circumstance had offered an occasion for the new commander to hit him hard upon a matter of fact. Beauchamp had sent word of his advance in rank, but requested his uncle not to imagine him wearing an *additional epaulette*; and he corrected the infallible gentleman's error (which had of course been reported to him when he was dreaming of Renée, by Mrs. Culling) concerning a lieutenant's shoulder decorations, most gravely; informing him of the anchor on the lieutenant's *pair* of epaulettes, and the anchor and star on a commander's, and the crown on a captain's, with a well-feigned solicitousness to save his uncle from blundering further. This was done in the dry neat manner which Mr. Romfrey could feel to be his own turned on him.

He began to conceive a vague respect for the fellow who

had proved him wrong upon a matter of fact. Beauchamp came from Africa rather worn by the climate, and immediately obtained the command of the Ariadne corvette, which had been some time in commission in the Mediterranean, whither he departed, without visiting Steynham; allowing Rosamund to think him tenacious of his wrath as well as of love. Mr. Romfrey considered him to be insatiable for service. Beauchamp, during his absence, had shown himself awake to the affairs of his country once only, in an urgent supplication he had forwarded for all his uncle's influence to be used to get him appointed to the first vacancy in Robert Hall's naval brigade, then forming a part of our handful in insurgent India. The fate of that chivalrous Englishman, that born sailor-warrior, that truest of heroes, imperishable in the memory of those who knew him, and in our annals, young though he was when death took him, had wrung from Nevil Beauchamp such a letter of tears as to make Mr. Romfrey believe the naval crown of glory his highest ambition. Who on earth could have guessed him to be bothering his head about politics all the while! Or was the whole stupid business a freak of the moment?

It became necessary for Mr. Romfrey to contemplate his eccentric nephew in the light of a mannikin once more. Consequently he called to mind, and bade Rosamund Culling remember, that he had foreseen and had predicted the mounting of Nevil Beauchamp on his political horse one day or another; and perhaps the earlier the better. And a donkey could have sworn that when he did mount he would come galloping in among the Radical rough-riders. Letters were pouring upon Steynham from men and women of Romfrey blood and relationship concerning the positive tone of Radicalism in the commander's address. Everard laughed at them. As a

practical man, his objection lay against the poor fool's choice of the peccant borough of Bevisham. Still, in view of the needfulness of his learning wisdom, and rapidly, the disbursement of a lot of his money, certain to be required by Bevisham's electors, seemed to be the surest method for quickening his wits. Thus would he be acting as his own chirurgeon, gaily practising phlebotomy on his person to cure him of his fever. Too much money was not the origin of the fever in Nevil's case, but he had too small a sense of the value of what he possessed, and the diminishing stock would be likely to cry out shrilly.

To this effect, never complaining that Nevil Beauchamp had not come to him to take counsel with him, the high-minded old gentleman talked. At the same time, while indulging in so philosophical a picture of himself as was presented by a Romfrey mildly accounting for events and smoothing them under the infliction of an offence, he could not but feel that Nevil had challenged him: such was the reading of it; and he waited for some justifiable excitement to fetch him out of the magnanimous mood, rather in the image of an angler, it must be owned.

'Nevil understands that I am not going to pay a farthing of his expenses in Bevisham?' he said to Mrs. Culling.

She replied blandly and with innocence, 'I have not seen him, sir.'

He nodded. At the next mention of Nevil between them, he asked, 'Where is it he 's lying perdu, ma'am?'

'I fancy in that town, in Bevisham.'

'At the Liberal, Radical, hotel?'

'I dare say; some place; I am not certain. . . .'

'The rascal doctor's house there? Shrapnel's?'

'Really . . . I have not seen him.'

'Have you heard from him?'

'I have had a letter; a short one.'

'Where did he date his letter from?'

'From Bevisham.'

'From what house?'

Rosamund glanced about for a way of escaping the question. There was none but the door. She replied, 'From Dr. Shrapnel's.'

'That 's the Anti-Game-Law agitator.'

'You do not imagine, sir, that Nevil subscribes to every thing the horrid man agitates for?'

'You don't like the man, ma'am?'

'I detest him.'

'Ha! So you have seen Shrapnel?'

'Only for a moment; a moment or two. I cannot endure him. I am sure I have reason.'

Rosamund flushed exceedingly red. The visit to Dr. Shrapnel's house was her secret, and the worming of it out made her feel guilty, and that feeling revived and heated her antipathy to the Radical doctor.

'What reason?' said Mr. Romfrey, freshening at her display of colour.

She would not expose Nevil to the accusation of childishness by confessing her positive reason, so she answered, 'The man is a kind of man . . . I was not there long; I was glad to escape. He . . .' she hesitated: for in truth it was difficult to shape the charge against him, and the effort to be reticent concerning Nevil, and communicative, now that he had been spoken of, as to the detested doctor, reduced her to some confusion. She was also fatally anxious to be in the extreme degree conscientious, and corrected and modified her remarks most suspiciously.

'Did he insult you, ma'am?' Mr. Romfrey inquired.

She replied hastily, 'Oh no. He may be a good man in his way. He is one of those men who do not seem to

think a woman may have opinions. He does not scruple to outrage those we hold. I am afraid he is an infidel. His ideas of family duties and ties, and his manner of expressing himself, shocked me, that is all. He is absurd. I dare say there is no harm in him, except for those who are so unfortunate as to fall under his influence—and that, I feel sure, cannot be permanent. He could not injure me personally. He could not offend me, I mean. Indeed, I have nothing whatever to say against him, as far as I . . .'

'Did he fail to treat you as a lady, ma'am?'

Rosamund was getting frightened by the significant pertinacity of her lord.

'I am sure, sir, he meant no harm.'

'Was the man uncivil to you, ma'am?' came the emphatic interrogation.

She asked herself, had Dr. Shrapnel been uncivil toward her? And so conscientious was she, that she allowed the question to be debated in her mind for half a minute, answering then, 'No, not uncivil. I cannot exactly explain. . . . He certainly did not intend to be uncivil. He is only an unpolished, vexatious man; enormously tall.'

Mr. Romfrey ejaculated, 'Ha! humph!'

His view of Dr. Shrapnel was taken from that instant. It was, that this enormously big blustering agitator against the preservation of birds, had behaved rudely toward the lady officially the chief of his household, and might be considered in the light of an adversary one would like to meet. The size of the man increased his aspect of villany, which in return added largely to his giant size. Everard Romfrey's mental eye could perceive an attractiveness about the man little short of magnetic; for he thought of him so much that he had to think of what was due to his pacifical disposition (deeply believed

in by him) to spare himself the trouble of a visit to Bevisham.

The young gentleman whom he regarded as the Radical doctor's dupe, fell in for a share of his view of the doctor, and Mr. Romfrey became less fitted to observe Nevil Beauchamp's doings with the Olympian gravity he had originally assumed.

The extreme delicacy of Rosamund's conscience was fretted by a remorseful doubt of her having conveyed a just impression of Dr. Shrapnel, somewhat as though the fine sleek coat of it were brushed the wrong way. Reflection warned her that her deliberative intensely sincere pause before she responded to Mr. Romfrey's last demand, might have implied more than her words. She consoled herself with the thought that it was the dainty susceptibility of her conscientiousness which caused these noble qualms, and so deeply does a refined nature esteem the gift, that her pride in it helped her to overlook her moral perturbation. She was consoled, moreover, up to the verge of triumph in her realization of the image of a rivalling and excelling power presented by Mr. Romfrey, though it had frightened her at the time. Let not Dr. Shrapnel come across him! She hoped he would not. Ultimately she could say to herself, 'Perhaps I need not have been so annoyed with the horrid man.' It was on Nevil's account. Shrapnel's contempt of the claims of Nevil's family upon him was actually a piece of impudence, impudently expressed, if she remembered correctly. And Shrapnel was a black malignant, the foe of the nation's Constitution, deserving of punishment if ever man was; with his ridiculous metaphors, and talk of organs and pianos, orchestras and despotisms, and flying to the sun! How could Nevil listen to the creature! Shrapnel must be a shameless hypocrite to mask his wickedness from one so clear-sighted as Nevil, and no

doubt he indulged in his impudence out of wanton pleasure in it. His business was to catch young gentlemen of family, and to turn them against their families, plainly. That was thinking the best of him. No doubt he had his objects to gain. 'He might have been as impudent as he liked to *me*; I would have pardoned him!' Rosamund exclaimed. Personally, you see, she was generous. On the whole, knowing Everard Romfrey as she did, she wished that she had behaved, albeit perfectly discreet in her behaviour, and conscientiously just, a shade or two differently. But the evil was done.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LEADING ARTICLE AND MR. TIMOTHY TURBOT

Nevil declined to come to Steynham, clearly owing to a dread of hearing Dr. Shrapnel abused, as Rosamund judged by the warmth of his written eulogies of the man, and an ensuing allusion to Game. He said that he had not made up his mind as to the Game Laws. Rosamund mentioned the fact to Mr. Romfrey. 'So we may stick by our licences to shoot to-morrow,' he rejoined. Of a letter that he also had received from Nevil, he did not speak. She hinted at it, and he stared. He would have deemed it as vain a subject to discourse of India, or Continental affairs, at a period when his house was full for the opening day of sport, and the expectation of keeping up his renown for great bags on that day so entirely occupied his mind. Good shots were present who had contributed to the fame of Steynham on other opening days. Birds were plentiful and promised not to be too wild. He had the range of the Steynham estate

in his eye, dotted with covers; and after Steynham, Holdesbury, which had never yielded him the same high celebrity, but both lay mapped out for action under the profound calculations of the strategist, ready to show the skill of the field tactician. He could not attend to Nevil. Even the talk of the forthcoming Elections, hardly to be avoided at his table, seemed a puerile distraction. Ware the foe of his partridges and pheasants, be it man or vermin! The name of Shrapnel was frequently on the tongue of Captain Baskelett. Rosamund heard him, in her room, and his derisive shouts of laughter over it. Cecil was a fine shot, quite as fond of the pastime as his uncle, and always in favour with him while sport stalked the land. He was in gallant spirits, and Rosamund, brooding over Nevil's fortunes, and sitting much alone, as she did when there were guests in the house, gave way to her previous apprehensions. She touched on them to Mr. Stukely Culbrett, her husband's old friend, one of those happy men who enjoy perceptions without opinions, and are not born to administer comfort to other than themselves. As far as she could gather, he fancied Nevil Beauchamp was in danger of something, but he delivered his mind only upon circumstances and characters: Nevil risked his luck, Cecil knew his game, Everard Romfrey was the staunchest of mankind: Stukely had nothing further to say regarding the situation. She asked him what he thought, and he smiled. Could a reasonable head venture to think anything in particular? He repeated the amazed, 'You don't say so' of Colonel Halkett, on hearing the name of the new Liberal candidate for Bevisham at the dinner-table, together with some of Cecil's waggish embroidery upon the theme.

Rosamund exclaimed angrily, 'Oh! if I had been there he would not have dared.'

'Why not be there?' said Stukely. 'You have had your choice for a number of years.'

She shook her head, reddening.

But supposing that she had greater privileges than were hers now? The idea flashed. A taint of personal pique, awakened by the fancied necessity for putting her devotedness to Nevil to proof, asked her if she would then be the official housekeeper to whom Captain Baskelett bowed low with affected respect and impertinent affability, ironically praising her abroad as a wonder among women, that could at one time have played the deuce in the family, had she chosen to do so.

'Just as you like,' Mr. Culbrett remarked. It was his ironical habit of mind to believe that the wishes of men and women—women as well as men—were expressed by their utterances.

'But speak of Nevil to Colonel Halkett,' said Rosamund, earnestly carrying on what was in her heart. 'Persuade the colonel you do not think Nevil foolish—not more than just a little impetuous. I want that marriage to come off! Not on account of her wealth. She is to inherit a Welsh mine from her uncle, you know, besides being an only child. Recall what Nevil was during the war. Miss Halkett has not forgotten it, I am sure, and a good word for him from a man of the world would, I am certain, counteract Captain Baskelett's—are they designs? At any rate, you can if you like help Nevil with the colonel. I am convinced they are doing him a mischief. Colonel Halkett has bought an estate—and what a misfortune that is!—close to Bevisham. I fancy he is Toryish. Will you not speak to him? At my request? I am so helpless I could cry.'

'Fancy you have no handkerchief,' said Mr. Culbrett: 'and give up scheming, pray. One has only to begin to

scheme, to shorten life to half-a-dozen hops and jumps. I could say to the colonel, "Young Beauchamp 's a political cub: he ought to have a motherly wife."'

'Yes, yes, you are right; don't speak to him at all,' said Rosamund, feeling that there must be a conspiracy to rob her of her proud independence, since not a soul could be won to spare her from taking some energetic step, if she would be useful to him she loved.

Colonel Halkett was one of the guests at Steynham who knew and respected her, and he paid her a visit and alluded to Nevil's candidature, apparently not thinking much the worse of him. 'We can't allow him to succeed,' he said, and looked for a smiling approval of such natural opposition, which Rosamund gave him readily after he had expressed the hope that Nevil Beauchamp would take advantage of his proximity to Mount Laurels during the contest to try the hospitality of the house. 'He won't mind meeting his uncle?' The colonel's eyes twinkled. 'My daughter has engaged Mr. Romfrey and Captain Baskelett to come to us when they have shot Holdesbury.'

And Captain Baskelett! thought Rosamund; her jealousy whispering that the mention of his name close upon Cecilia Halkett's might have a nuptial signification.

She was a witness from her window—a prisoner's window, her eager heart could have termed it—of a remarkable ostentation of cordiality between the colonel and Cecil, in the presence of Mr. Romfrey. Was it his humour to conspire to hand Miss Halkett to Cecil, and then to show Nevil the prize he had forfeited by his folly? The three were on the lawn a little before Colonel Halkett's departure. The colonel's arm was linked with Cecil's while they conversed. Presently the latter received his afternoon's letters, and a newspaper. He soon had the paper out at a square stretch, and sprightly

information for the other two was visible in his crowing throat. Mr. Romfrey raised the gun from his shoulder-pad, and grounded it. Colonel Halkett wished to peruse the matter with his own eyes, but Cecil could not permit it; he must read it aloud for them, and he suited his action to his sentences. Had Rosamund been accustomed to leading articles which are the composition of men of an imposing vocabulary, she would have recognized and as good as read one in Cecil's gestures as he tilted his lofty stature forward and back, marking his commas and semicolons with flapping of his elbows, and all but doubling his body at his periods. Mr. Romfrey had enough of it half-way down the column; his head went sharply to left and right. Cecil's peculiar foppish slicing down of his hand pictured him protesting that there was more and finer of the inimitable stuff to follow. The end of the scene exhibited the paper on the turf, and Colonel Halkett's hand on Cecil's shoulder, Mr. Romfrey nodding some sort of acquiescence over the muzzle of his gun, whether reflective or positive Rosamund could not decide. She sent out a footman for the paper, and was presently communing with its eloquent large type, quite unable to perceive where the comicality or the impropriety of it lay, for it would have struck her that never were truer things of Nevil Beauchamp better said in the tone befitting them. This perhaps was because she never heard fervid praises of him, or of anybody, delivered from the mouth, and it is not common to hear Englishmen phrasing great eulogies of one another. Still, as a rule, they do not object to have it performed in that region of our national eloquence, the Press, by an Irishman or a Scotchman. And what could there be to warrant Captain Baskelett's malicious derision, and Mr. Romfrey's nodding assent to it, in an article where all was truth?

The truth was mounted on an unusually high wind. It was indeed a leading article of a banner-like bravery, and the unrolling of it was designed to stir emotions. Beauchamp was the theme. Nevil had it under his eyes earlier than Cecil. The paper was brought into his room with the beams of day, damp from the presses of the *Bevisham Gazette*, exactly opposite to him in the White Hart Hotel, and a glance at the paragraphs gave him a lively ardour to spring to his feet. What writing! He was uplifted as 'The heroical Commander Beauchamp, of the Royal Navy,' and 'Commander Beauchamp, R.N., a gentleman of the highest connections': he was 'that illustrious Commander Beauchamp, of our matchless navy, who proved on every field of the last glorious war of this country that the traditional valour of the noble and indomitable blood transmitted to his veins had lost none of its edge and weight since the battle-axes of the Lords de Romfrey, ever to the fore, clove the skulls of our national enemy on the wide and fertile champaigns of France.' This was pageantry.

There was more of it. Then the serious afflatus of the article condescended, as it were, to blow a shrill and well-known whistle:—the study of the science of navigation made by Commander Beauchamp, R.N., was cited for a jocose warranty of a seaman's aptness to assist in steering the Vessel of the State. After thus heeling over, to tip a familiar wink to the multitude, the leader tone resumed its fit deportment. Commander Beauchamp, in responding to the invitation of the great and united Liberal party of the borough of Bevisham, obeyed the inspirations of genius, the dictates of humanity, and what he rightly considered the paramount duty, as it is the proudest ambition, of the citizen of a free country.

But for an occasional drop and bump of the sailing gas-bag upon catch-words of enthusiasm, which are the

rhetoric of the merely windy, and a collapse on a poetic line, which too often signalizes the rhetorician's emptiness of his wind, the article was eminent for flight, sweep, and dash, and sailed along far more grandly than ordinary provincial organs for the promoting or seconding of public opinion, that are as little to be compared with the mighty metropolitan as are the fife and bugle boys practising on their instruments round melancholy outskirts of garrison towns with the regimental marching full band under the presidency of its drum-major. No signature to the article was needed for Bevisham to know who had returned to the town to pen it. Those long-stretching sentences, comparable to the very ship Leviathan, spanning two Atlantic billows, appertained to none but the renowned Mr. Timothy Turbot, of the Corn Law campaigns, Reform agitations, and all manifestly popular movements requiring the heaven-endowed man of speech, an interpreter of multitudes, and a prompter. Like most men who have little to say, he was an orator in print, but that was a poor medium for him—his body without his fire. Mr. Timothy's place was the platform. A wise discernment, or else a lucky accident (for he came hurriedly from the soil of his native isle, needing occupation), set him on that side in politics which happened to be making an established current and strong headway. Oratory will not work against the stream, or on languid tides. Driblets of movements that allowed the world to doubt whether they were so much movements as illusions of the optics, did not suit his genius. Thus he was a Liberal, no Radical, fountain. Liberalism had the attraction for the orator of being the active force in politics, between two passive opposing bodies, the aspect of either of which it can assume for a menace to the other, Toryish as against Radicals; a trifle red in the eyes of the Tory. It can seem to lean back on the Past; it can

seem to be amorous of the Future. It is actually the thing of the Present and its urgencies, therefore popular, pouring forth the pure waters of moderation, strong in their copiousness. Delicious and rapturous effects are to be produced in the flood of a Liberal oration by a chance infusion of the fierier spirit, a flavour of Radicalism. That is the thing to set an audience bounding and quirking. Whereas if you commence by tilting a Triton pitcher full of the neat liquor upon them, you have to resort to the natural element for the orator's art of variation, you are diluted—and that 's bathos, to quote Mr. Timothy. It was a fine piece of discernment in him. Let Liberalism be your feast, Radicalism your spice. And now and then, off and on, for a change, for diversion, for a new emotion, just for half an hour or so—now and then the Sunday coat of Toryism will give you an air. You have only to complain of the fit, to release your shoulders in a trice. Mr. Timothy felt for his art as poets do for theirs, and considered what was best adapted to speaking, purely to speaking. Upon no creature did he look with such contempt as upon Dr. Shrapnel, whose loose disjunct audiences he was conscious he could, giving the doctor any start he liked, whirl away from him and have compact, enchained, at his first flourish; yea, though they were composed of 'the poor man,' with a stomach for the political distillery fit to drain relishingly every private bogside or mountain-side tap in old Ireland in its best days—the illicit, you understand.

Further, to quote Mr. Timothy's points of view, the Radical orator has but two notes, and one is the drawling pathetic, and the other is the ultra-furious; and the effect of the former we liken to the English working man's wife's hob-set queasy brew of well-meant villany, that she calls by the innocent name of tea; and the latter is to be blown, asks to be blown, and never should be blown

without at least seeming to be blown, with an accompaniment of a house on fire. Sir, we must adapt ourselves to our times. Perhaps a spark or two does lurk about our house, but we have vigilant watchmen in plenty, and the house has been pretty fairly insured. Shrieking in it is an annoyance to the inmates, nonsensical; weeping is a sickly business. The times are against Radicalism to the full as much as great oratory is opposed to extremes. These drag the orator too near to the matter. So it is that one Radical speech is amazingly like another—they all have the earth-spots. They smell, too; they smell of brimstone. Soaring is impossible among that faction; but this they can do, they can furnish the Tory his opportunity to soar. When hear you a thrilling Tory speech that carries the country with it, save when the incendiary Radical has shrieked? If there was envy in the soul of Timothy, it was addressed to the fine occasions offered to the Tory speaker for vindicating our ancient principles and our sacred homes. He admired the tone to be assumed for that purpose: it was a good note. Then could the Tory, delivering at the right season the Shakesperian '*This England . . .*' and Byronic—'*The inviolate Island . . .*' shake the frame, as though smiting it with the tail of the gymnotus electricus. Ah, and then could he thump out his Horace, the Tory's mentor and his cordial, with other great ancient comic and satiric poets, his old Port of the classical cellarage, reflecting veneration upon him who did but name them to an audience of good dispositions. The Tory possessed also an innate inimitably easy style of humour, that had the long reach, the jolly lordly indifference, the comfortable masterfulness, of the whip of a four-in-hand driver, capable of flicking and stinging, and of being ironically caressing. Timothy appreciated it, for he had winced under it. No professor of Liberalism could venture on it,

unless it were in the remote district of a back parlour, in the society of a cherishing friend or two, and with a slice of lemon requiring to be refloated in the glass.

But gifts of this description were of a minor order. Liberalism gave the heading cry, devoid of which parties are dogs without a scent, orators mere pump-handles. The Tory's cry was but a whistle to his pack, the Radical howled to the moon like any chained hound. And no wonder, for these parties had no established current, they were as hard-bound waters; the Radical being dyked and dammed most soundly, the Tory resembling a placid lake of the plains, fed by springs and no confluents. For such good reasons, Mr. Timothy rejoiced in the happy circumstances which had expelled him from the shores of his native isle to find a refuge and a vocation in Manchester at a period when an orator happened to be in request because dozens were wanted. That centre of convulsions and source of streams possessed the statistical orator, the reasoning orator, and the inspired; with others of quality; and yet it had need of an ever-ready spontaneous imperturbable speaker, whose bubbling generalizations and ability to beat the drum humorous could swing halls of meeting from the grasp of an enemy, and then ascend on incalescent adjectives to the popular idea of the sublime. He was the artistic orator of Corn Law Repeal—the Manchester flood, before which time Whigs were, since which they have walked like spectral antediluvians, or floated as dead canine bodies that are sucked away on the ebb of tides and flung back on the flow, ignorant whether they be progressive or retrograde. Timothy Turbot assisted in that vast effort. It should have elevated him beyond the editorship of a country newspaper. Why it did not do so his antagonists pretended to know, and his friends would smile to hear. The report was that he worshipped the nymph Whisky.

Timothy's article had plucked Beauchamp out of bed; Beauchamp's card in return did the same for him.

'Commander Beauchamp? I am heartily glad to make your acquaintance, sir; I 've been absent, at work, on the big business we have in common, I rejoice to say, and am behind my fellow townsmen in this pleasure: and lucky I slept here in my room above, where I don't often sleep, for the row of the machinery—it 's like a steamer that won't go, though it 's always starting ye,' Mr. Timothy said in a single breath, upon entering the back office of the *Gazette*, like unto those accomplished violinists who can hold on the bow to finger an incredible number of notes, and may be imaged as representing slow paternal Time, that rolls his capering dot-headed generation of mortals over the wheel, hundreds to the minute. 'You 'll excuse my not shaving, sir, to come down to your summons without an extra touch to the neck-band.'

Beauchamp beheld a middle-sized round man, with loose lips and pendant indigo jowl, whose eyes twinkled watery, like pebbles under the shore-wash, and whose neck-band needed an extra touch from fingers other than his own.

'I am sorry to have disturbed you so early,' he replied.

'Not a bit, Commander Beauchamp, not a bit, sir. Early or late, and ay ready—with the Napiers; I 'll wash, I 'll wash.'

'I came to speak to you of this article of yours on me. They tell me in the office that you are the writer. Pray don't "Commander" me so much.—It 's not customary, and I object to it.'

'Certainly, certainly,' Timothy acquiesced.

'And for the future, Mr. Turbot, please to be good enough not to allude in print to any of my performances here and there. Your intentions are complimentary, but it happens that I don't like a public patting on the back.'

'No, and that 's true,' said Timothy.

His appreciative and sympathetic agreement with these sharp strictures on the article brought Beauchamp to a stop.

Timothy waited for him; then, smoothing his prickly cheek, remarked: 'If I 'd guessed your errand, Commander Beauchamp, I 'd have called in the barber before I came down, just to make myself decent for a first introduction.'

Beauchamp was not insensible to the slyness of the poke at him. 'You see, I come to the borough unknown to it, and as quietly as possible, and I want to be taken as a politician,' he continued, for the sake of showing that he had sufficient to say to account for his hasty and peremptory summons of the writer of that article to his presence. 'It 's excessively disagreeable to have one 's family lugged into notice in a newspaper—especially if they are of different politics. *I* feel it.'

All would, sir,' said Timothy.

'Then why the deuce did you do it?'

Timothy drew a lading of air into his lungs. 'Politics, Commander Beauchamp, involves the doing of lots of disagreeable things to ourselves and our relations; it 's positive. I 'm a soldier of the Great Campaign: and who knows it better than I, sir? It 's climbing the greasy pole for the leg o' mutton, that makes the mother's heart ache for the jacket and the nether garments she mended neatly, if she didn't make them. Mutton or no mutton, there 's grease for certain! Since it 's sure we can't be disconnected from the family, the trick is to turn the misfortune to a profit; and allow me the observation, that an old family, sir, and a high and titled family, is not to be despised for a background of a portrait in naval uniform, with medal and clasps, and some small smoke of powder clearing off over there:—that 's if we 're to act sagaciously in introducing an unknown candidate to a borough that

has a sneaking liking for the kind of person, more honour to it. I 'm a political veteran, sir; I speak from experience. We must employ our weapons, every one of them, and all off the grindstone.'

'Very well,' said Beauchamp. 'Now understand; you are not in future to employ the weapons, as you call them, that I have objected to.'

Timothy gaped slightly.

'Whatever you will, but no puffery,' Beauchamp added. 'Can I by any means arrest—purchase—is it possible, tell me, to lay an embargo—stop to-day's issue of the *Gazette*?'

'No more than the bite of a mad dog,' Timothy replied, before he had considered upon the monstrous nature of the proposal.

Beauchamp humphed, and tossed his head. The simile of the dog struck him with intense effect.

'There 'd be a second edition,' said Timothy, 'and you might buy up that. But there 'll be a third, and you may buy up that; but there 'll be a fourth and a fifth, and so on ad infinitum, with the advertisement of the sale of the foregoing creating a demand like a rageing thirst in a shipwreck, in Bligh's boat, in the tropics. I 'm afraid, Com—Captain Beauchamp, sir, there 's no stopping the Press while the people have an appetite for it—and a Company 's at the back of it.'

'Pooh, don't talk to me in that way; all I complain of is the figure you have made of me,' said Beauchamp, fetching him smartly out of his nonsense; 'and all I ask of you is not to be at it again. Who would suppose from reading an article like that, that I am a candidate with a single political idea!'

'An article like that,' said Timothy, winking, and a little surer of his man now that he suggested his possession of ideas, 'an article like that is the best cloak you can

put on a candidate with too many of 'em, Captain Beauchamp. I 'll tell you, sir; I came, I heard of your candidature, I had your sketch, the pattern of ye, before me, and I was told that Dr. Shrapnel fathered you politically. There was my brief! I had to persuade our constituents that you, Commander Beauchamp of the Royal Navy, and the great family of the Earls of Romfrey, one of the heroes of the war, and the recipient of a Royal Humane Society's medal for saving life in Bevisham waters, were something more than the Radical doctor's political son; and, sir, it was to this end, aim, and object, that I wrote the article I am not ashamed to avow as mine, and I do so, sir, because of the solitary merit it has of serving your political interests as the Liberal candidate for Bevisham by counteracting the unpopularity of Dr. Shrapnel's name, on the one part, and of reviving the credit due to your valour and high bearing on the field of battle in defence of your country, on the other, so that Bevisham may apprehend, in spite of party distinctions, that it has the option, and had better seize upon the honour, of making a M.P. of a hero.'

Beauchamp interposed hastily: 'Thank you, thank you for the best of intentions. But let me tell you I am prepared to stand or fall with Dr. Shrapnel, and be hanged to all that humbug.'

Timothy rubbed his hands with an abstracted air of washing. 'Well, commander, well, sir, they say a candidate 's to be humoured in his infancy, for *he* has to do all the humouring before he 's many weeks old at it; only there 's the fact!—he soon finds out he has to pay for his first fling, like the son of a family sowing his oats to reap his Jews. Credit me, sir, I thought it prudent to counteract a bit of an apothecary's shop odour in the junior Liberal candidate's address. I found the town sniffing, they scented Shrapnel in the composition.'

'Every line of it was mine,' said Beauchamp.

'Of course it was, and the address was admirably worded, sir, I make bold to say it to your face; but most indubitably it threatened powerful drugs for weak stomachs, and it blew cold on votes, which are sensitive plants like nothing else in botany.'

'If they are only to be got by abandoning principles, and by anything but honesty in stating them, they may go,' said Beauchamp.

'I repeat, my dear sir, I repeat, the infant candidate delights in his honesty, like the babe in its nakedness, the beautiful virgin in her innocence. So he does; but he discovers it 's time for him to wear clothes in a contested election. And what 's that but to preserve the outlines pretty correctly, whilst he doesn't shock and horrify the optics? A dash of conventionalism makes the whole civilized world kin, ye know. That 's the truth. You must appear to be one of them, for them to choose you. After all, there 's no harm in a dyer's hand; and, sir, a candidate looking at his own, when he has won the Election . . .'

'Ah, well,' said Beauchamp, swinging on his heel, 'and now I 'll take my leave of you, and I apologize for bringing you down here so early. Please attend to what I have said; it 's peremptory. You will give me great pleasure by dining with me to-night, at the hotel opposite. Will you? I don't know what kind of wine I shall be able to offer you. Perhaps you know the cellar, and may help me in that.'

Timothy grasped his hand, 'With pleasure, Commander Beauchamp. They have a bucellas over there that 's old, and a tolerable claret, and a Port to be inquired for under the breath, in a mysteriously intimate tone of voice, as one says, "I know of your treasure, and the corner under ground where it lies." Avoid the

The Estuary from Holly Hill.

champagne. 'Be the banqueting wine. Ditto the sherry. One can drink them, one can drink them.'

'As a quarter to eight this evening, then,' said Nevil.

'I'll be there at the stroke of the clock, sure as the date of a bill,' said Wilmore.

And it's early to guess whether you'll catch Bevisham or you won't, he reflected, as he gazed at the young gentleman [illegible] the road; but female Bevisham's wish goes if that counts for much. Timothy confessed, then without the employment of any weapon save arrogance and a look of sanctum, the commander had gone [illegible] catching the feminine side of himself.

CHAPTER XV

CECILIA HALKETT

[illegible] walked down to the pier, where he took a [illegible] Isis, to see Jack Wilmore, whom he had [illegible] his wrath from his last cruise, and first he [illegible] of a dive in cold water as a specific for [illegible]. O save the edge to a fine appetite that he [illegible] satisfy while Wilmore talked of those famous [illegible] the navy has ever been going.

[illegible] Bevisham,' said Leonard [illegible] better than you what a novel [illegible] of, so I hope you'll get your Elec- [illegible] as a good look-out for the [illegible] A regular Board with a per- [illegible] and a regular vote of money [illegible] to that. Hardist has [illegible] in Bevisham. I think I can get one or two [illegible] Why aren't you a Tory? No Whigs nor Liberals

The Estuary

champagne: 'tis the banqueting wine. Ditto the sherry. One can drink them, one can drink them.'

'At a quarter to eight this evening, then,' said Nevil.

'I 'll be there at the stroke of the clock, sure as the date of a bill,' said Timothy.

And it 's early to guess whether you 'll catch Bevisham or you won't, he reflected, as he gazed at the young gentleman crossing the road; but female Bevisham 's with you, if that counts for much. Timothy confessed, that without the employment of any weapon save arrogance and a look of candour, the commander had gone some way toward catching the feminine side of himself.

CHAPTER XV

CECILIA HALKETT

Beauchamp walked down to the pier, where he took a boat for H.M.S. Isis, to see Jack Wilmore, whom he had not met since his return from his last cruise, and first he tried the efficacy of a dive in salt water, as a specific for irritation. It gave the edge to a fine appetite that he continued to satisfy while Wilmore talked of those famous dogs to which the navy has ever been going.

'We want another panic, Beauchamp,' said Lieutenant Wilmore. 'No one knows better than you what a naval man has to complain of, so I hope you 'll get your Election, if only that we may reckon on a good look-out for the interests of the service. A regular Board with a permanent Lord High Admiral, and a regular vote of money to keep it up to the mark. Stick to that. Hardist has a vote in Bevisham. I think I can get one or two more. Why aren't you a Tory? No Whigs nor Liberals

look after us half so well as the Tories. It 's enough to break a man's heart to see the troops of dockyard workmen marching out as soon as ever a Liberal Government marches in. Then it 's one of our infernal panics again, and patch here, patch there; every inch of it make-believe! I 'll prove to you from examples that the humbug of Government causes exactly the same humbugging workmanship. It seems as if it were a game of "rascals all." Let them sink us! but, by heaven! one can't help feeling for the country. And I do say it 's the doing of those Liberals. Skilled workmen, mind you, not to be netted again so easily. America reaps the benefit of our folly. . . . That was a lucky run of yours up the Niger; the admiral was friendly, but you deserved your luck. For God's sake, don't forget the state of our service when you 're one of our cherubs up aloft, Beauchamp. This I 'll say, I 've never heard a man talk about it as you used to in old midshipmite days, whole watches through—don't you remember? on the North American station, and in the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean. And that girl at Malta! I wonder what has become of her? What a beauty she was! I dare say she wasn't so fine a girl as the Armenian you unearthed on the Bosphorus, but she had something about her a fellow can't forget. That was a lovely creature coming down the hills over Granada on her mule. Ay, we 've seen handsome women, Nevil Beauchamp. But you always were lucky, invariably, and I should bet on you for the Election.'

'Canvass for me, Jack,' said Beauchamp, smiling at his friend's unconscious double-skeining of subjects. 'If I turn out as good a politician as you are a seaman, I shall do. Pounce on Hardist's vote without losing a day. I would go to him, but I 've missed the Halketts twice. They 're on the Otley river, at a place called Mount

Laurels, and I particularly want to see the colonel. Can you give me a boat there, and come?'

'Certainly,' said Wilmore. 'I 've danced there with the lady, the handsomest girl, English style, of her time. And come, come, our English style 's the best. It wears best, it looks best. Foreign women . . . they 're capital to flirt with. But a girl like Cecilia Halkett—one can't call her a girl, and it won't do to say Goddess, and queen and charmer are out of the question, though she 's both, and angel into the bargain; but, by George! what a woman to call wife, you say; and a man attached to a woman like that never can let himself look small. No such luck for me; only I swear if I stood between a good and a bad action, the thought of that girl would keep me straight, and I 've only danced with her once!'

Not long after sketching this rough presentation of the lady, with a masculine hand, Wilmore was able to point to her in person on the deck of her father's yacht, the Esperanza, standing out of Otley river. There was a gallant splendour in the vessel that threw a touch of glory on its mistress in the minds of the two young naval officers, as they pulled for her in the ship's gig.

Wilmore sang out, 'Give way, men!'

The sailors bent to their oars, and presently the schooner's head was put to the wind.

'She sees we 're giving chase,' Wilmore said. 'She can't be expecting *me*, so it must be you. No, the colonel doesn't race her. They 've only been back from Italy six months: I mean the schooner. I remember she talked of you when I had her for a partner. Yes, now I mean Miss Halkett. Blest if I think she talked of anything else. She sees us. I 'll tell you what she likes: she likes yachting, she likes Italy, she likes painting, likes things old English, awfully fond of heroes. I told her a tale of one of our men saving life. "Oh!" said she,

"didn't your friend Nevil Beauchamp save a man from drowning, off the guardship, in exactly the same place?" And next day she sent me a cheque for three pounds for the fellow. Steady, men! I keep her letter.'

The boat went smoothly alongside the schooner. Miss Halkett had come to the side. The oars swung fore and aft, and Beauchamp sprang on deck.

Wilmore had to decline Miss Halkett's invitation to him as well as his friend, and returned in his boat. He left the pair with a ruffling breeze, and a sky all sail, prepared, it seemed to him, to enjoy the most delicious you-and-I on salt water that a sailor could dream of; and placidly envying, devoid of jealousy, there was just enough of fancy quickened in Lieutenant Wilmore to give him pictures of them without disturbance of his feelings —one of the conditions of the singular visitation we call happiness, if he could have known it.

For a time his visionary eye followed them pretty correctly. So long since they had parted last! such changes in the interval! and great animation in Beauchamp's gaze, and a blush on Miss Halkett's cheeks.

She said once, 'Captain Beauchamp.' He retorted with a solemn formality. They smiled, and immediately took footing on their previous intimacy.

'How good it was of you to come twice to Mount Laurels,' said she. 'I have not missed you to-day. No address was on your card. Where are you staying in the neighbourhood? At Mr. Lespel's?'

'I 'm staying at a Bevisham hotel,' said Beauchamp.

'You have not been to Steynham yet? Papa comes home from Steynham to-night.'

'Does he? Well, the Ariadne is only just paid off, and I can't well go to Steynham yet. I——' Beauchamp was astonished at the hesitation he found in himself to name it: 'I have business in Bevisham.'

'Naval business?' she remarked.

'No,' said he.

The sensitive prescience we have of a critical distaste of our proceedings is, the world is aware, keener than our intuition of contrary opinions; and for the sake of preserving the sweet outward forms of friendliness, Beauchamp was anxious not to speak of the business in Bevisham just then, but she looked and he had hesitated, so he said flatly, 'I am one of the candidates for the borough.'

'Indeed!'

'And I want the colonel to give me his vote.'

The young lady breathed a melodious 'Oh!' not condemnatory or reproachful—a sound to fill a pause. But she was beginning to reflect.

'Italy and our English Channel are my two Poles,' she said. 'I am constantly swaying between them. I have told papa we will not lay up the yacht while the weather holds fair. Except for the absence of deep colour and bright colour, what can be more beautiful than these green waves and that dark forest's edge, and the garden of an island! The yachting-water here is an unrivalled lake; and if I miss colour, which I love, I remind myself that we have temperate air here, not a sun that sends you under cover. We can have our fruits too, you see.' One of the yachtsmen was handing her a basket of hot-house grapes, reclining beside crisp home-made loaflets. 'This is my luncheon. Will you share it, Nevil?'

His Christian name was pleasant to hear from her lips. She held out a bunch to him.

'Grapes take one back to the South,' said he. 'How do you bear compliments? You have been in Italy some years, and it must be the South that has worked the miracle.'

'In my growth?' said Cecilia, smiling. 'I have grown out of my Circassian dress, Nevil.'

'You received it, then?'

'I wrote you a letter of thanks—and abuse, for your not coming to Steynham. You may recognize these pearls.'

The pearls were round her right wrist. He looked at the blue veins.

'They 're not pearls of price,' he said.

'I do not wear them to fascinate the jewellers,' rejoined Miss Halkett. 'So you are a candidate at an Election. You still have a tinge of Africa, do you know? But you have not abandoned the navy?'

'Not altogether.'

'Oh! no, no: I hope not. I have heard of you, . . . but who has not? We cannot spare officers like you. Papa was delighted to hear of your promotion. Parliament!'

The exclamation was contemptuous.

'It 's the highest we can aim at,' Beauchamp observed meekly.

'I think I recollect you used to talk politics when you were a midshipman,' she said. 'You headed the aristocracy, did you not?'

'The aristocracy wants a head,' said Beauchamp.

'Parliament, in my opinion, is the best of occupations for idle men,' said she.

'It shows that it is a little too full of them.'

'Surely the country can go on very well without so much speech-making?'

'It can go on very well for the rich.'

Miss Halkett tapped with her foot.

'I should expect a Radical to talk in that way, Nevil.'

'Take me for one.'

'I would not even imagine it.'

'Say Liberal, then.'

'Are you not'—her eyes opened on him largely, and narrowed from surprise to reproach, and then to pain—'are you not one of us? Have you gone over to the enemy, Nevil?'

'I have taken my side, Cecilia; but we, on our side, don't talk of an enemy.'

'Most unfortunate! We are Tories, you know, Nevil. Papa is a thorough Tory. He cannot vote for you. Indeed I have heard him say he is anxious to defeat the plots of an old Republican in Bevisham—some doctor there; and I believe he went to London to look out for a second Tory candidate to oppose to the Liberals. Our present Member is quite safe, of course. Nevil, this makes me unhappy. Do you not feel that it is playing traitor to one's class to join those men?'

Such was the Tory way of thinking, Nevil Beauchamp said: the Tories upheld their Toryism in the place of patriotism.

'But do we not owe the grandeur of the country to the Tories?' she said, with a lovely air of conviction. 'Papa has told me how false the Whigs played the Duke in the Peninsula: ruining his supplies, writing him down, declaring, all the time he was fighting his first hard battles, that his cause was hopeless—that resistance to Napoleon was impossible. The Duke never, never had loyal support *but* from the Tory Government. The Whigs, papa says, absolutely preached *submission* to Napoleon! The Whigs, I hear, were the Liberals of those days. The two Pitts were Tories. The greatness of England has been built up by the Tories. I do and will defend them: it is the fashion to decry them now. They have the honour and safety of the country at heart. They do not play disgracefully at reductions of taxes, as the Liberals do. They have given us all our heroes. *Non*

fu mai gloria senza invidia. They have done service enough to despise the envious mob. They never condescend to supplicate brute force for aid to crush their opponents. You feel in all they do that the instincts of gentlemen are active.'

Beauchamp bowed.

'Do I speak too warmly?' she asked. 'Papa and I have talked over it often, and especially of late. You will find him your delighted host and your inveterate opponent.'

'And you?'

'Just the same. You will have to pardon me; I am a terrible foe.'

'I declare to you, Cecilia, I would prefer having you against me to having you indifferent.'

'I wish I had not to think it right that you should be beaten. And now—can you throw off political Nevil, and be sailor Nevil? I distinguish between my old friend, and my . . . our . . .'

'Dreadful antagonist?'

'Not so dreadful, except in the shock he gives us to find him in the opposite ranks. I am grieved. But we will finish our sail in peace. I detest controversy. I suppose, Nevil, you would have no such things as yachts? they are the enjoyments of the rich!'

He reminded her that she wished to finish her sail in peace; and he had to remind her of it more than once. Her scattered resources for argumentation sprang up from various suggestions, such as the flight of yachts, mention of the shooting season, sight of a royal palace; and adopted a continually heightened satirical form, oddly intermixed with an undisguised affectionate friendliness. Apparently she thought it possible to worry him out of his adhesion to the wrong side in politics. She certainly had no conception of the nature of his

political views, for one or two extreme propositions flung to him in jest, he swallowed with every sign of a perfect facility, as if the Radical had come to regard stupendous questions as morsels barely sufficient for his daily sustenance. Cecilia reflected that he must be playing, and as it was not a subject for play she tacitly reproved him by letting him be the last to speak of it. He may not have been susceptible to the delicate chastisement, probably was not, for when he ceased it was to look on the beauty of her lowered eyelids, rather with an idea that the weight of his argument lay on them. It breathed from him; both in the department of logic and of feeling, in his plea for the poor man and his exposition of the poor man's rightful claims, he evidently imagined that he had spoken overwhelmingly; and to undeceive him in this respect, for his own good, Cecilia calmly awaited the occasion when she might show the vanity of arguments in their effort to overcome convictions. He stood up to take his leave of her, on their return to the mouth of the Otley river, unexpectedly, so that the occasion did not arrive; but on his mentioning an engagement he had to give a dinner to a journalist and a tradesman of the town of Bevisham, by way of excuse for not complying with her gentle entreaty that he would go to Mount Laurels and wait to see the colonel that evening, 'Oh! then your choice must be made irrevocably, I am sure,' Miss Halkett said, relying upon intonation and manner to convey a great deal more, and not without a minor touch of resentment for his having dragged her into the discussion of politics, which she considered as a slime wherein men hustled and tussled, no doubt worthily enough, and as became them; not however to impose the strife upon the elect ladies of earth. What gentleman ever did talk to a young lady upon the dreary topic seriously? Least of all should Nevil Beauchamp have

done it. That object of her high imagination belonged to the exquisite sphere of the feminine vision of the pure poetic, and she was vexed by the discord he threw between her long-cherished dream and her unanticipated realization of him: if indeed it was he presenting himself to her in his own character, and not trifling, or not passing through a phase of young man's madness.

Possibly he might be the victim of the latter and more pardonable state, and so thinking she gave him her hand.

'Good-bye, Nevil. I may tell papa to expect you to-morrow?'

'Do, and tell him to prepare for a field-day.'

She smiled. 'A sham fight that will not win you a vote! I hope you will find your guests this evening agreeable companions.'

Beauchamp half-shrugged involuntarily. He obliterated the piece of treason toward them by saying that he hoped so; as though the meeting them, instead of slipping on to Mount Laurels with her, were an enjoyable prospect.

He was dropped by the Esperanza's boat near Otley ferry, to walk along the beach to Bevisham, and he kept eye on the elegant vessel as she glided swan-like to her moorings off Mount Laurels park through dusky merchant craft, colliers, and trawlers, loosely shaking her towering snow-white sails, unchallenged in her scornful supremacy; an image of a refinement of beauty, and of a beautiful servicelessness.

As the yacht, so the mistress: things of wealth, owing their graces to wealth, devoting them to wealth—splendid achievements of art both! and dedicated to the gratification of the superior senses.

Say that they were precious examples of an accomplished civilization; and perhaps they did offer a visible

ideal of grace for the rough world to aim at. They might in the abstract address a bit of a monition to the uncultivated, and encourage the soul to strive toward perfection in beauty: and there is no contesting the value of beauty when the soul is taken into account. But were they not in too great a profusion in proportion to their utility? That was the question for Nevil Beauchamp. The democratic spirit inhabiting him, temporarily or permanently, asked whether they were not increasing to numbers which were oppressive? And further, whether it was good for the country, the race, ay, the species, that they should be so distinctly removed from the thousands who fought the grand, and the grisly, old battle with nature for bread of life. Those grimy sails of the colliers and fishing-smacks, set them in a great sea, would have beauty for eyes and soul beyond that of elegance and refinement. And do but look on them thoughtfully, the poor are everlastingly, unrelievedly, in the abysses of the great sea. . . .

One cannot pursue to conclusions a line of meditation that is half-built on the sensations as well as on the mind. Did Beauchamp at all desire to have those idly lovely adornments of riches, the Yacht and the Lady, swept away? Oh, dear, no. He admired them, he was at home with them. They were much to his taste. Standing on a point of the beach for a last look at them before he set his face to the town, he prolonged the look in a manner to indicate that the place where business called him was not in comparison at all so pleasing: and just as little enjoyable were his meditations opposed to predilections. Beauty plucked the heart from his breast. But he had taken up arms; he had drunk of the *questioning* cup, that which denieth peace to us, and which projects us upon the missionary search of the How, the Wherefore, and the Why not, ever afterward. He questioned his justification, and yours, for gratifying tastes in an ill-regulated

world of wrong-doing, suffering, sin, and bounties unrighteously dispensed—not sufficiently dispersed. He said by-and-by to pleasure, battle to-day. From his point of observation, and with the store of ideas and images his fiery yet reflective youth had gathered, he presented himself as it were saddled to that hard-riding force known as the logical impetus, which spying its quarry over precipices, across oceans and deserts, and through systems and webs, and into shops and cabinets of costliest china, will come at it, will not be refused, let the distances and the breakages be what they may. He went like the meteoric man with the mechanical legs in the song, too quick for a cry of protestation, and reached results amazing to his instincts, his tastes, and his training, not less rapidly and naturally than tremendous Ergo is shot forth from the clash of a syllogism.

CHAPTER XVI

A PARTIAL DISPLAY OF BEAUCHAMP IN HIS COLOURS

Beauchamp presented himself at Mount Laurels next day, and formally asked Colonel Halkett for his vote, in the presence of Cecilia.

She took it for a playful glance at his new profession of politician: he spoke half-playfully. Was it possible to speak in earnest?

'I 'm of the opposite party,' said the colonel; as conclusive a reply as could be: but he at once fell upon the rotten navy of a Liberal Government. How could a true sailor think of joining those Liberals! The question referred to the country, not to a section of it, Beauchamp protested with impending emphasis: Tories and Liberals

were much the same in regard to the care of the navy. 'Nevil!' exclaimed Cecilia. He cited beneficial Liberal bills recently passed, which she accepted for a concession of the navy to the Tories, and she smiled. In spite of her dislike of politics, she had only to listen a few minutes to be drawn into the contest: and thus it is that one hot politician makes many among women and men of a people that have the genius of strife, or else in this case the young lady did unconsciously feel a deep interest in refuting and overcoming Nevil Beauchamp. Colonel Halkett denied the benefits of those bills. 'Look,' said he, 'at the scarecrow plight of the army under a Liberal Government!' This laid him open to the charge that he was for backing Administrations instead of principles.

'I do,' said the colonel. 'I would rather have a good Administration than all your talk of principles: one 's a fact, but principles? principles?' He languished for a phrase to describe the hazy things. 'I have mine, and you have yours. It 's like a dispute between religions. There 's no settling it except by main force. That 's what principles lead you to.'

Principles may be hazy, but heavy artillery is disposable in defence of them, and Beauchamp fired some reverberating guns for the eternal against the transitory;—with less of the gentlemanly fine taste, the light and easy social semi-irony, than Cecilia liked and would have expected from him. However, as to principles, no doubt Nevil was right, and Cecilia drew her father to another position. 'Are not we Tories to have principles as well as the Liberals, Nevil?'

'They may have what they call principles,' he admitted, intent on pursuing his advantage over the colonel, who said, to shorten the controversy: 'It 's a question of my vote, and my liking. I like a Tory Government, and I don't like the Liberals. I like gentlemen; I don't like

a party that attacks everything, and beats up the mob for power, and repays it with sops, and is dragging us down from all we were proud of.'

'But the country is growing, the country wants expansion,' said Beauchamp; 'and if your gentlemen by birth are not up to the mark, you must have leaders that are.'

'Leaders who cut down expenditure, to create a panic that doubles the outlay! I know them.'

'A *panic*, Nevil.' Cecilia threw stress on the memorable word.

He would hear no reminder in it. The internal condition of the country was now the point for seriously-minded Englishmen.

'My dear boy, what *have* you seen of the country?' Colonel Halkett inquired.

'Every time I have landed, colonel, I have gone to the mining and the manufacturing districts, the centres of industry; wherever there was dissatisfaction. I have attended meetings, to see and hear for myself. I have read the papers. . . .'

'The papers!'

'Well, they 're the mirror of the country.'

'Does one see everything in a mirror, Nevil?' said Cecilia: 'even in the smoothest?'

He retorted softly: 'I should be glad to see what you see,' and felled her with a blush.

For an example of the mirror offered by the Press, Colonel Halkett touched on Mr. Timothy Turbot's article in eulogy of the great Commander Beauchamp. 'Did you like it?' he asked. 'Ah, but if you meddle with politics, you must submit to be held up on the prongs of a fork, my boy; soaped by your backers and shaved by the foe; and there 's a figure for a gentleman! as your uncle Romfrey says.'

Cecilia did not join this discussion, though she had

heard from her father that something grotesque had been written of Nevil. Her foolishness in blushing vexed body and mind. She was incensed by a silly compliment that struck at her feminine nature when her intellect stood in arms. Yet more hurt was she by the reflection that a too lively sensibility might have conjured up the idea of the compliment. And again, she wondered at herself for not resenting so rare a presumption as it implied, and not disdaining so outworn a form of flattery. She wondered at herself too for thinking of resentment and disdain in relation to the familiar commonplaces of licenced impertinence. Over all which hung a darkened image of her spirit of independence, like a moon in eclipse.

Where lay *his* weakness? Evidently in the belief that he had thought profoundly. But what minor item of insufficiency or feebleness was discernible? She discovered that he could be easily fretted by similes and metaphors: they set him staggering and groping like an ancient knight of faëry in a forest bewitched.

'Your specific for the country is, then, Radicalism,' she said, after listening to an attack on the Tories for their want of a policy and indifference to the union of classes.

'I would prescribe a course of it, Cecilia; yes,' he turned to her.

'The Dr. Dulcamara of a single drug?'

'Now you have a name for me! Tory arguments always come to epithets.'

'It should not be objectionable. Is it not honest to pretend to have only one cure for mortal maladies? There can hardly be two panaceas, can there be?'

'So you call me quack?'

'No, Nevil, no,' she breathed a rich contralto note of denial: 'but if the country is the patient, and you will have it swallow your prescription . . .'

'There 's nothing like a metaphor for an evasion,' said Nevil, blinking over it.

She drew him another analogy, longer than was at all necessary; so tedious that her father struck through it with the remark:

'Concerning that quack—that 's one in the background, though!'

'I know of none,' said Beauchamp, well-advised enough to forbear mention of the name of Shrapnel.

Cecilia petitioned that her stumbling ignorance, which sought the road of wisdom, might be heard out. She had a reserve entanglement for her argumentative friend. 'You were saying, Nevil, that you were for principles rather than for individuals, and you instanced Mr. Cougham, the senior Liberal candidate of Bevisham, as one whom you would prefer to see in Parliament instead of Seymour Austin, though you confess to Mr. Austin's far superior merits as a politician and servant of his country: but Mr. Cougham supports Liberalism while Mr. Austin is a Tory. You are for the principle.'

'I am,' said he, bowing.

She asked: 'Is not that equivalent to the doctrine of election by Grace?'

Beauchamp interjected: 'Grace! election?'

Cecilia was tender to his inability to follow her allusion.

'Thou art a Liberal—then rise to membership,' she said. 'Accept my creed, and thou art of the chosen. Yes, Nevil, you cannot escape from it. Papa, he preaches Calvinism in politics.'

'We stick to men, and good men,' the colonel flourished. 'Old English for me!'

'You might as well say, old timber vessels, when Iron 's afloat, colonel.'

'I suspect you have the worst of it there, papa,' said Cecilia, taken by the unexpectedness and smartness of

the comparison coming from wits that she had been undervaluing.

'I shall not own I 'm worsted until I surrender my vote,' the colonel rejoined.

'I won't despair of it,' said Beauchamp.

Colonel Halkett bade him come for it as often as he liked. You 'll be beaten in Bevisham, I warn you. Tory reckonings are safest: it 's an admitted fact: and *we know* you can't win. According to my judgement a man owes a duty to his class.'

'A man owes a duty to his class as long as he sees his class doing its duty to the country,' said Beauchamp; and he added, rather prettily in contrast with the sententious commencement, Cecilia thought, that the apathy of his class was proved when such as he deemed it an obligation on them to come forward and do what little they could. The deduction of the proof was not clearly consequent, but a meaning was expressed; and in that form it brought him nearer to her abstract idea of Nevil Beauchamp than when he raged and was precise.

After his departure she talked of him with her father, to be charitably satirical over him, it seemed.

The critic in her ear had pounced on his repetition of certain words that betrayed a dialectical stiffness and hinted a narrow vocabulary: his use of emphasis, rather reminding her of his uncle Everard, was, in a young man, a little distressing. 'The *apathy* of the country, papa; the *apathy* of the rich; a state of universal *apathy*. Will you inform me, papa, what the Tories are *doing*? Do we really give our consciences to the keeping of the *parsons* once a week, and let them *dogmatize* for us to save us from exertion? We must attach ourselves to *principles*; *nothing* is *permanent* but *principles*. Poor Nevil! And still I am sure you have, as I have, the feeling that one must respect him. I am quite convinced that he

supposes he is doing his best to serve his country by trying for Parliament, fancying himself a Radical. I forgot to ask him whether he had visited his great-aunt, Mrs. Beauchamp. They say the dear old lady has influence with him.'

'I don't think he 's been anywhere,' Colonel Halkett half laughed at the quaint fellow. 'I wish the other great-nephew of hers were in England, for us to run him against Nevil Beauchamp. He 's touring the world. I 'm told he 's orthodox, and a tough debater. We have to take what we can get.'

'My best wishes for your success, and you and I will not talk of politics any more, papa. I hope Nevil will come often, for his own good; he will meet his own set of people here. And if he should dogmatize so much as to rouse our apathy to denounce his principles, we will remember that we are British, and can be sweet-blooded in opposition. Perhaps he may change, even *tra le tre ore e le quattro:* electioneering should be a lesson. From my recollection of Blackburn Tuckham, he was a boisterous boy.'

'He writes uncommonly clever letters home to his aunt Beauchamp. She has handed them to me to read,' said the colonel. 'I do like to see tolerably solid young fellows: they give one some hope of the stability of the country.'

'They are not so interesting to study, and not half so amusing,' said Cecilia.

Colonel Halkett muttered his objections to the sort of amusement furnished by firebrands.

'Firebrand is too strong a word for poor Nevil,' she remonstrated.

In that estimate of the character of Nevil Beauchamp, Cecilia soon had to confess that she had been deceived, though not by him.

CHAPTER XVII

HIS FRIEND AND FOE

Looking from her window very early on a Sunday morning, Miss Halkett saw Beauchamp strolling across the grass of the park. She dressed hurriedly and went out to greet him, smiling and thanking him for his friendliness in coming.

He said he was delighted, and appeared so, but dashed the sweetness. 'You know I can't canvass on Sundays.'

'I suppose not,' she replied. 'Have you walked up from Bevisham? You must be tired.'

'Nothing tires me,' said he.

With that they stepped on together.

Mount Laurels, a fair broad house backed by a wood of beeches and firs, lay open to view on the higher grassed knoll of a series of descending turfy mounds dotted with gorse-clumps, and faced South-westerly along the run of the Otley river to the gleaming broad water and its opposite border of forest, beyond which the downs of the island threw long interlapping curves. Great ships passed on the line of the water to and fro; and a little mist of masts of the fishing and coasting craft by Otley village, near the river's mouth, was like a web in air. Cecilia led him to her dusky wood of firs, where she had raised a bower for a place of poetical contemplation and reading when the clear lapping salt river beneath her was at high tide. She could hail the Esperanza from that cover; she could step from her drawing-room window, over the flower-beds, down the gravel walk to the hard, and be on board her yacht within seven minutes, out on her salt-water lake within twenty, closing her wings in

a French harbour by nightfall of a summer's day, whenever she had the whim to fly abroad. Of these enviable privileges she boasted with some happy pride.

'It 's the finest yachting-station in England,' said Beauchamp.

She expressed herself very glad that he should like it so much. Unfortunately she added, 'I hope you will find it pleasanter to be here than canvassing.'

'I have no pleasure in canvassing,' said he. 'I canvass poor men accustomed to be paid for their votes, and who get nothing from me but what the baron would call a parsonical exhortation. I 'm in the thick of the most spiritless crew in the kingdom. Our southern men will not compare with the men of the north. But still, even among these fellows, I see danger for the country if our commerce were to fail, if distress came on them. There 's always danger in disunion. That 's what the rich won't see. They see simply nothing out of their own circle; and they won't take a thought of the overpowering contrast between their luxury and the way of living, that 's half-starving, of the poor. They understand it when fever comes up from back alleys and cottages, and then they join their efforts to sweep the poor out of the district. The poor are to get to their work anyhow, after a long morning's walk over the proscribed space; for we must have poor, you know. The wife of a parson I canvassed yesterday, said to me, "Who is to work for us, if you do away with the poor, Captain Beauchamp?"'

Cecilia quitted her bower and traversed the wood silently.

'So you would blow up my poor Mount Laurels for a peace-offering to the lower classes?'

'I should hope to put it on a stronger foundation, Cecilia.'

'By means of some convulsion?'

'By forestalling one.'

'That must be one of the new ironclads,' observed Cecilia, gazing at the black smoke-pennon of a tower that slipped along the water-line. 'Yes? You were saying? Put us on a stronger——?'

'It 's, I think, the Hastings: she broke down the other day on her trial trip,' said Beauchamp, watching the ship's progress animatedly. 'Peppel commands her—a capital officer. I suppose we must have these costly big floating barracks. I don't like to hear of everything being done for the defensive. The defensive is perilous policy in war. It 's true, the English don't wake up to their work under half a year. But, no: defending and looking to defences is bad for the fighting power; and there 's half a million gone on that ship. *Half a million!* Do you know how many poor taxpayers it takes to make up that sum, Cecilia?'

'A great many,' she slurred over them; 'but we must have big ships, and the best that are to be had.'

'Powerful fast rams, sea-worthy and fit for running over shallows, carrying one big gun; swarms of harryers and worriers known to be kept ready for immediate service; readiness for the offensive in case of war—there 's the best defence against a declaration of war by a foreign State.'

'I like to hear you, Nevil,' said Cecilia, beaming: 'Papa thinks we have a miserable army—in numbers. He says, the wealthier we become the more difficult it is to recruit able-bodied men on the volunteering system. Yet the wealthier we are the more an army is wanted, both to defend our wealth and to preserve order. I fancy he half inclines to compulsory enlistment. Do speak to him on that subject.'

Cecilia must have been innocent of a design to awaken

the fire-flash in Nevil's eyes. She had no design, but hostility was latent, and hence perhaps the offending phrase.

He nodded and spoke coolly. 'An army *to preserve order*? So, then, an army to threaten civil war!'

'To crush revolutionists.'

'Agitators, you mean. My dear good old colonel—I have always loved him—must not have more troops at his command.'

'Do you object to the drilling of the whole of the people?'

'Does not the colonel, Cecilia? I am sure he does in his heart, and, for different reasons, I do. He won't trust the working-classes, nor I the middle.'

'Does Dr. Shrapnel hate the middle-class?'

'Dr. Shrapnel cannot hate. He and I are of opinion, that as the middle-class are the party in power, they would not, if they knew the use of arms, move an inch farther in Reform, for they would no longer be in fear of the class below them.'

'But what horrible notions of your country have you, Nevil! It is dreadful to hear. Oh! do let us avoid politics for ever. Fear!'

'All concessions to the people have been won from fear.'

'I have not heard so.'

'I will read it to you in the History of England.'

'You paint us in a condition of Revolution.'

'Happily it 's not a condition unnatural to us. The danger would be in not letting it be progressive, and there 's a little danger too at times in our slowness. We change our blood or we perish.'

'Dr. Shrapnel?'

'Yes, I *have* heard Dr. Shrapnel say that. And, by-the-way, Cecilia—will you? can you?—take me for the

witness to his character. He is the most guileless of men, and he 's the most unguarded. My good Rosamund saw him. She is easily prejudiced when she is a trifle jealous, and you may hear from her that he rambles, talks wildly. It may seem so. I maintain there is wisdom in him when conventional minds would think him at his wildest. Believe me, he is the humanest, the best of men, tender-hearted as a child: the most benevolent, simple-minded, admirable old man—the man I am proudest to think of as an Englishman and a man living in my time, of all men existing. I can't overpraise him.'

'He has a bad reputation.'

'Only with the class that will not meet him and answer him.'

'Must we invite him to our houses?'

'It would be difficult to get him to come, if you did. I mean, meet him in debate and answer his arguments. Try the question by brains.'

'Before mobs?'

'*Not* before mobs. I punish you by answering you seriously.'

'I am sensible of the flattery.'

'Before mobs!' Nevil ejaculated. 'It 's the Tories that mob together and cry down every man who appears to them to threaten their privileges. Can you guess what Dr. Shrapnel compares them to?'

'Indeed, Nevil, I have not an idea. I only wish your patriotism were large enough to embrace them.'

'He compares them to geese claiming possession of the whole common, and hissing at every foot of ground they have to yield. They 're always having to retire and always hissing. "Retreat and menace," that 's the motto for them.'

'Very well, Nevil, I am a goose upon a common.'

So saying, Cecilia swam forward like a swan on water

to give the morning kiss to her papa, by the open window of the breakfast-room.

Never did bird of Michaelmas fling off water from her feathers more thoroughly than this fair young lady the false title she pretended to assume.

'I hear you 're of the dinner party at Grancey Lespel's on Wednesday,' the colonel said to Beauchamp. 'You 'll have to stand fire.'

'*They* will, papa,' murmured Cecilia. 'Will Mr. Austin be there?'

'I particularly wish to meet Mr. Austin,' said Beauchamp.

'Listen to him, if you do meet him,' she replied.

His look was rather grave.

'Lespel 's a Whig,' he said.

The colonel answered. 'Lespel *was* a Whig. Once a Tory always a Tory,—but court the people and you 're on quicksands, and that 's where the Whigs are. What he is now I don't think he knows himself. You won't get a vote.'

Cecilia watched her friend Nevil recovering from his short fit of gloom. He dismissed politics at breakfast and grew companionable, with the charm of his earlier day. He was willing to accompany her to church too.

'You will hear a long sermon,' she warned him.

'Forty minutes.' Colonel Halkett smothered a yawn that was both retro and prospective.

'It has been fifty, papa.'

'It has been an hour, my dear.'

It was good discipline nevertheless, the colonel affirmed, and Cecilia praised the Rev. Mr. Brisk of Urplesdon vicarage as one of our few remaining Protestant clergymen.

'Then he ought to be supported,' said Beauchamp. 'In the dissensions of religious bodies it is wise to pat the weaker party on the back.—I quote Stukely Culbrett.'

'I 've heard him,' sighed the colonel. 'He calls the Protestant clergy the social police of the English middle-class. Those are the things he lets fly. I have heard that man say that the Church stands to show the passion of the human race for the drama. He said it in my presence. And there 's a man who calls himself a Tory! You have rather too much of that playing at grudges and dislikes at Steynham, with squibs, nicknames, and jests at things that—well, that our stability is bound up in. I hate squibs.'

'And I,' said Beauchamp. Some shadow of a frown crossed him; but Stukely Culbrett's humour seemed to be a refuge. 'Protestant *parson*—not clergy,' he corrected the colonel. 'Can't you hear Mr. Culbrett, Cecilia? The Protestant parson is the policeman set to watch over the respectability of the middle-class. He has sharp eyes for the sins of the poor. As for the rich, they support his church; they listen to his sermon—to set an example: *discipline*, colonel. You discipline the tradesman, who 's afraid of losing your custom, and the labourer, who might be deprived of his bread. But the people? It 's put down to the wickedness of human nature that the parson has not got hold of the people. The parsons have lost them by senseless Conservatism, because they look to the Tories for the support of their Church, and let the religion run down the gutters. And how many thousands have you at work in the pulpit every Sunday? I 'm told the Dissenting ministers have some vitality.'

Colonel Halkett shrugged with disgust at the mention of Dissenters.

'And those thirty or forty thousand, colonel, call the men that do the work they ought to be doing demagogues. The parsonry are a power absolutely to be counted for waste, as to progress.'

Cecilia perceived that her father was beginning to be fretted.

She said, with a tact that effected its object: 'I am one who hear Mr. Culbrett without admiring his wit.'

'No, and I see no good in this kind of Steynham talk,' Colonel Halkett said, rising. 'We 're none of us perfect. Heaven save us from political parsons!'

Beauchamp was heard to utter, 'Humanity.'

The colonel left the room with Cecilia, muttering the Steynham tail to that word: 'tomtity,' for the solace of an aside repartee.

She was on her way to dress for church. He drew her into the library, and there threw open a vast placard lying on the table. It was printed in blue characters and red. 'This is what I got by the post this morning. I suppose Nevil knows about it. He wants tickling, but I don't like this kind of thing. It 's not fair war. It 's as bad as using explosive bullets in my old game.'

'*Can* he expect his adversaries to be tender with him?' Cecilia simulated vehemence in an underbreath. She glanced down the page

'FRENCH MARQUEES' caught her eye.

It was a page of verse. And, oh! could it have issued from a Tory Committee?

'The Liberals are as bad, and worse,' her father said.

She became more and more distressed. 'It seems so very mean, papa; so base. Ungenerous is no word for it. And how vulgar! Now I remember, Nevil said he wished to see Mr. Austin.'

'Seymour Austin would not sanction it.'

'No, but Nevil might hold him responsible for it.'

'I suspect Mr. Stukely Culbrett, whom he quotes, and that smoking-room lot at Lespel's. I distinctly discountenance it. So I shall tell them on Wednesday night. Can you keep a secret?'

'And after all Nevil Beauchamp is very young, papa!—of course I can keep a secret.'

The colonel exacted no word of honour, feeling quite sure of her.

He whispered the secret in six words, and her cheeks glowed vermilion.

'But they will meet on Wednesday after *this*,' she said, and her sight went dancing down the column of verse, of which the following trotting couplet is a specimen:—

'O did you ever, hot in love, a little British middy see,
Like Orpheus asking what the deuce to do without Eurydice?'

The middy is jilted by his French Marquees, whom he 'did adore,' and in his wrath he recommends himself to the wealthy widow Bevisham, concerning whose choice of her suitors there is a doubt: but the middy is encouraged to persevere:—

'Up, up, my pretty middy; take a draught of foaming Sillery;
Go in and win the widdy with your Radical artillery.'

And if Sillery will not do, he is advised, he being for superlatives, to try the sparkling *Sillery* of the Radical vintage, selected grapes.

This was but impudent nonsense. But the reiterated apostrophe to 'My French Marquees' was considered by Cecilia to be a brutal offence.

She was shocked that her party should have been guilty of it. Nevil certainly provoked, and he required, hard blows; and his uncle Everard might be right in telling her father that they were the best means of teaching him to come to his understanding. Still a foul and stupid squib did appear to her a debasing weapon to use.

'I cannot congratulate you on your choice of a second candidate, papa,' she said scornfully.

'I don't much congratulate myself,' said the colonel.

'Here 's a letter from Mrs. Beauchamp informing me that her boy Blackburn will be home in a month. There would have been plenty of time for him. However, we must make up our minds to it. Those two 'll be meeting on Wednesday, so keep your secret. It will be out to-morrow week.'

'But Nevil will be accusing Mr. Austin.'

'Austin won't be at Lespel's. And he must bear it, for the sake of peace.'

'Is Nevil ruined with his uncle, papa?'

'Not a bit, I should imagine. It 's Romfrey's fun.'

'And this disgraceful squib is a part of the fun?'

'That I know nothing about, my dear. I 'm sorry, but there 's pitch and tar in politics as well as on shipboard.'

'I do not see that there should be,' said Cecilia resolutely.

'We can't hope to have what should be.'

'Why not? I would have it: I would do my utmost to have it,' she flamed out.

'Your *utmost*?' Her father was glancing at her foregone mimicry of Beauchamp's occasional strokes of emphasis. 'Do your utmost to have your bonnet on in time for us to walk to church. I can't bear driving there.'

Cecilia went to her room with the curious reflection, awakened by what her father had chanced to suggest to her mind, that she likewise could be fervid, positive, uncompromising—who knows? Radicalish, perhaps, when she looked eye to eye on an evil. For a moment or so she espied within herself a gulf of possibilities, wherein black night-birds, known as queries, roused by shot of light, do flap their wings.—Her utmost to have be what should be! And why not?

But the intemperate feeling subsided while she was

doing duty before her mirror, and the visionary gulf closed immediately.

She had merely been very angry on Nevil Beauchamp's behalf, and had dimly seen that a woman can feel insurgent, almost revolutionary, for a personal cause, Tory though her instinct of safety and love of smoothness make her.

No reflection upon this casual piece of self or sex revelation troubled her head. She did, however, think of her position as the friend of Nevil in utter antagonism to him. It beset her with contradictions that blew rough on her cherished serenity; for she was of the order of ladies who, by virtue of their pride and spirit, their port and their beauty, decree unto themselves the rank of princesses among women, before our world has tried their claim to it. She had lived hitherto in upper air, high above the clouds of earth. Her ideal of a man was of one similarly disengaged and lofty—loftier. Nevil, she could honestly say, was not her ideal; he was only her old friend, and she was opposed to him in his present adventure. The striking at him to cure him of his mental errors and excesses was an obligation; she could descend upon him calmly with the chastening rod, pointing to the better way; but the shielding of him was a different thing; it dragged her down so low, that in her condemnation of the Tory squib she found herself asking herself whether haply Nevil had flung off the yoke of the French lady; with the foolish excuse for the question, that if he had not, he must be bitterly sensitive to the slightest public allusion to her. Had he? And if not, how desperately faithful he was! or else how marvellously seductive she!

Perhaps it was a lover's despair that had precipitated him into the mire of politics. She conceived the impression that it must be so, and throughout the day she

had an inexplicable unsweet pleasure in inciting him to argumentation and combating him, though she was compelled to admit that he had been colloquially charming antecedent to her naughty provocation; and though she was indebted to him for his patient decorum under the weary wave of the Reverend Mr. Brisk. Now what does it matter what a woman thinks in politics? But he deemed it of great moment. Politically, he deemed that women have souls, a certain fire of life for exercise on earth. He appealed to reason in them; he would not hear of convictions. He quoted the Bevisham doctor: 'Convictions are generally first impressions that are sealed with later prejudices,' and insisted there was wisdom in it. Nothing tired him, as he had said, and addressing woman or man, no prospect of fatigue or of hopeless effort daunted him in the endeavour to correct an error of judgement in politics—*his* notion of an error. The value he put upon speaking, urging his views, was really fanatical. It appeared that he canvassed the borough from early morning till near midnight, and nothing would persuade him that his chance was poor; nothing that an entrenched Tory like her father, was not to be won even by an assault of all the reserve forces of Radical pathos, prognostication, and statistics.

Only conceive Nevil Beauchamp knocking at doors late at night, the sturdy beggar of a vote! or waylaying workmen, as he confessed without shame that he had done, on their way trooping to their midday meal; penetrating malodoriferous rooms of dismal ten-pound cottagers, to exhort bedraggled mothers and babes, and besotted husbands; and exposed to rebuffs from impertinent tradesmen; and lampooned and travestied, shouting speeches to roaring men, pushed from shoulder to shoulder of the mob! . . .

Cecilia dropped a curtain on her mind's picture of him.

But the blinding curtain rekindled the thought that the line he had taken could not but be the desperation of a lover abandoned. She feared it was, she feared it was not. Nevil Beauchamp's foe persisted in fearing that it was not; his friend feared that it was. Yet why? For if it was, then he could not be quite in earnest, and might be cured. Nay, but earnestness works out its own cure more surely than frenzy, and it should be preferable to think him sound of heart, sincere though mistaken. Cecilia could not decide upon what she dared wish for his health's good. Friend and foe were not further separable within her bosom than one tick from another of a clock; they changed places, and next his friend was fearing what his foe had feared: they were inextricable.

Why had he not sprung up on a radiant aquiline ambition, whither one might have followed him, with eyes and prayers for him, if it was not possible to do so companionably? At present, in the shape of a canvassing candidate, it was hardly honourable to let imagination dwell on him, save compassionately.

When he rose to take his leave, Cecilia said, '*Must* you go to Itchincope on Wednesday, Nevil?'

Colonel Halkett added: 'I don't think I would go to Lespel's if I were you. I rather suspect Seymour Austin will be coming on Wednesday, and that 'll detain me here, and you might join us and lend him an ear for an evening.'

'I have particular reasons for going to Lespel's; I hear he wavers toward a Tory conspiracy of some sort,' said Beauchamp.

The colonel held his tongue.

The untiring young candidate chose to walk down to Bevisham at eleven o'clock at night, that he might be the readier to continue his canvass of the borough on Monday morning early. He was offered a bed or a conveyance, and he declined both; the dog-cart he declined out of

consideration for horse and groom, which an owner of stables could not but approve.

Colonel Halkett broke into exclamations of pity for so good a young fellow so misguided.

The night was moonless, and Cecilia, looking through the window, said whimsically, 'He has gone out into the darkness, and is no light in it!'

Certainly none shone. She however carried a lamp that revealed him footing on with a wonderful air of confidence, and she was rather surprised to hear her father regret that Nevil Beauchamp should be losing his good looks already, owing to that miserable business of his in Bevisham. She would have thought the contrary, that he was looking as well as ever.

'He dresses just as he used to dress,' she observed.

The individual style of a naval officer of breeding, in which you see neatness trifling with disorder, or disorder plucking at neatness, like the breeze a trim vessel, had been caught to perfection by Nevil Beauchamp, according to Cecilia. It presented him to her mind in a cheerful and a very undemocratic aspect, but in realizing it, the thought, like something flashing black, crossed her—how attractive such a style must be to a Frenchwoman!

'He may look a little worn,' she acquiesced.

CHAPTER XVIII

CONCERNING THE ACT OF CANVASSING

Tories dread the restlessness of Radicals, and Radicals are in awe of the organization of Tories. Beauchamp thought anxiously of the high degree of confidence existing in the Tory camp, whose chief could afford to keep aloof,

while he slaved all day and half the night to thump ideas into heads, like a cooper on a cask:—an impassioned cooper on an empty cask! if such an image is presentable. Even so enviously sometimes the writer and the barrister, men dependent on their active wits, regard the man with a business fixed in an office managed by clerks. That man seems by comparison celestially seated. But he has his fits of trepidation; for new tastes prevail and new habits are formed, and the structure of his business will not allow him to adapt himself to them in a minute. The secure and comfortable have to pay in occasional panics for the serenity they enjoy. Mr. Seymour Austin candidly avowed to Colonel Halkett, on his arrival at Mount Laurels, that he was advised to take up his quarters in the neighbourhood of Bevisham by a recent report of his committee, describing the young Radical's canvass as redoubtable. Cougham he did not fear: he could make a sort of calculation of the votes for the Liberal thumping on the old drum of Reform; but the number for him who appealed to feelings and quickened the romantic sentiments of the common people now huddled within our electoral penfold, was not calculable. Tory and Radical have an eye for one another, which overlooks the Liberal at all times except when he is, as they imagine, playing the game of either of them.

'Now we shall see the passions worked,' Mr. Austin said, deploring the extension of the franchise.

He asked whether Beauchamp spoke well.

Cecilia left it to her father to reply; but the colonel appealed to her, saying, 'Inclined to dragoon one, isn't he?'

She did not think that. 'He speaks . . . he speaks well in conversation. I fancy he would be liked by the poor. I should doubt his being a good public speaker. He certainly has command of his temper: that is one thing. I cannot say whether it favours oratory. He is

indefatigable. One may be sure he will not faint by the way. He quite believes in himself. But, Mr. Austin, do you really regard him as a serious rival?'

Mr. Austin could not tell. No one could tell the effect of an extended franchise. The untried venture of it depressed him. 'Men have come suddenly on a borough before now and carried it,' he said.

'Not a borough like Bevisham?'

He shook his head. 'A fluid borough, I 'm afraid.'

Colonel Halkettt interposed: 'But Ferbrass is quite sure of his district.'

Cecilia wished to know who the man was, of the mediævally sounding name.

'Ferbrass is an old lawyer, my dear. He comes of five generations of lawyers, and he 's as old in the county as Grancey Lespel. Hitherto he has always been to be counted on for marching his district to the poll like a regiment. That 's our strength—the professions, especially lawyers.'

'Are not a great many lawyers Liberals, papa?'

'A great many *barristers* are, my dear.'

Thereat the colonel and Mr. Austin smiled together.

It was a new idea to Cecilia that Nevil Beauchamp should be considered by a man of the world anything but a well-meaning, moderately ridiculous young candidate; and the fact that one so experienced as Seymour Austin deemed him an adversary to be grappled with in earnest, created a small revolution in her mind, entirely altering her view of the probable pliability of his Radicalism under pressure of time and circumstances. Many of his remarks, that she had previously half smiled at, came across her memory hard as metal. She began to feel some terror of him, and said, to reassure herself: 'Captain Beauchamp is not likely to be a champion with a very large following. He is too much of a political mystic, I think.'

'Many young men are, before they have written out a fair copy of their meaning,' said Mr. Austin.

Cecilia laughed to herself at the vision of the fiery Nevil engaged in writing out a fair copy of his meaning. How many erasures! what foot-notes!

The arrangement was for Cecilia to proceed to Itchincope alone for a couple of days, and bring a party to Mount Laurels through Bevisham by the yacht on Thursday, to meet Mr. Seymour Austin and Mr. Everard Romfrey. An early day of the next week had been agreed on for the unmasking of the second Tory candidate. She promised that in case Nevil Beauchamp should have the hardihood to enter the enemy's nest at Itchincope on Wednesday, at the great dinner and ball there, she would do her best to bring him back to Mount Laurels, that he might meet his uncle Everard, who was expected there. At least he may consent to come for an evening,' she said. 'Nothing will take him from that canvassing. It seems to me it must be not merely distasteful . . . ?'

Mr. Austin replied: 'It 's disagreeable, but it 's the practice. I would gladly be bound by a common undertaking to abstain.'

'Captain Beauchamp argues that it would be all to your advantage. He says that a personal visit is the only chance for an unknown candidate to make the people acquainted with him.'

'It 's a very good opportunity for making him acquainted with *them*; and I hope he may profit by it.'

'Ah! pah! "To beg the vote and wink the bribe,"' Colonel Halkett subjoined abhorrently:—

> '"It well becomes the Whiggish tribe
> To beg the vote and wink the bribe."

Canvassing means intimidation or corruption.'

'Or the mixture of the two, called cajolery,' said Mr. Austin; 'and that was the principal art of the Whigs.'

Thus did these gentlemen converse upon canvassing.

It is not possible to gather up in one volume of sound the rattle of the knocks at Englishmen's castle-gates during election days; so, with the thunder of it unheard, the majesty of the act of canvassing can be but barely appreciable, and he, therefore, who would celebrate it must follow the candidate obsequiously from door to door, where, like a cross between a postman delivering a bill and a beggar craving an alms, patiently he attempts the extraction of the vote, as little boys pick periwinkles with a pin.

'This is your duty, which I most abjectly entreat you to do,' is pretty nearly the form of the supplication.

How if, instead of the solicitation of the thousands by the unit, the meritorious unit were besought by rushing thousands?—as a mound of the plains that is circumvented by floods, and to which the waters cry, Be thou our island. Let it be answered the questioner, with no discourteous adjectives, Thou fool! To come to such heights of popular discrimination and political ardour the people would have to be vivified to a pitch little short of eruptive: it would be Boreas blowing Ætna inside them; and we should have impulse at work in the country, and immense importance attaching to a man's whether he will or he won't—enough to womanize him. We should be all but having Parliament for a sample of our choicest rather than our likest: and see you not a peril in that?

Conceive, for the fleeting instants permitted to such insufferable flights of fancy, our picked men ruling! So despotic an oligarchy as would be there, is not a happy

subject of contemplation. It is not too much to say that a domination of the Intellect in England would at once and entirely alter the face of the country. We should be governed by the head with a vengeance: all the rest of the country being base members indeed; Spartans—helots. Criticism, now so helpful to us, would wither to the root: fun would die out of Parliament, and outside of it: we could never laugh at our masters, or command them: and that good old-fashioned shouldering of separate interests, which, if it stops progress, like a block in the pit entrance to a theatre, proves us equal before the law, puts an end to the pretence of higher merit in the one or the other, and renders a stout build the safest assurance for coming through ultimately, would be transformed to a painful orderliness, like a City procession under the conduct of the police, and to classifications of things according to their public value: decidedly no benefit to burly freedom. None, if there were no shouldering and hustling, could tell whether actually the fittest survived; as is now the case among survivors delighting in a broad-chested fitness.

And consider the freezing isolation of a body of our quintessential elect, seeing below them none to resemble them! Do you not hear in imagination the land's regrets for that amiable nobility whose pretensions were comically built on birth, acres, tailoring, style, and an air? Ah, that these unchallengeable new lords could be exchanged for those old ones! These, with the traditions of how great people should look in our country, these would pass among us like bergs of ice—a pure Polar aristocracy, inflicting the woes of wintriness upon us. Keep them from concentrating! At present I believe it to be their honest opinion, their wise opinion, and the sole opinion common to a majority of them, that it is more salutary, besides more diverting, to have the fools

of the kingdom represented than not. As professors of the sarcastic art they can easily take the dignity out of the fools' representative at their pleasure, showing him at antics while he supposes he is exhibiting an honourable and a decent series of movements. Generally, too, their archery can check him when he is for any of his measures; and if it does not check, there appears to be such a property in simple sneering, that it consoles even when it fails to right the balance of power. Sarcasm, we well know, confers a title of aristocracy straightway and sharp on the sconce of the man who does but imagine that he is using it. What, then, must be the elevation of these princes of the intellect in their own minds! Hardly worth bartering for worldly commanderships, it is evident.

Briefly, then, we have a system, not planned but grown, the outcome and image of our genius, and all are dissatisfied with parts of it; but, as each would preserve his own, the surest guarantee is obtained for the integrity of the whole by a happy adjustment of the energies of opposition, which—you have only to look to see—goes far beyond concord in the promotion of harmony. This is our English system; like our English pudding, a fortuitous concourse of all the sweets in the grocer's shop, but an excellent thing for all that, and let none threaten it. Canvassing appears to be mixed up in the system; at least I hope I have shown that it will not do to reverse the process, for fear of changes leading to a sovereignty of the austere and antipathetic Intellect in our England, that would be an inaccessible tyranny of a very small minority, necessarily followed by tremendous convulsions.

CHAPTER XIX

LORD PALMET, AND CERTAIN ELECTORS OF BEVISHAM

MEANTIME the candidates raised knockers, rang bells, bowed, expounded their views, praised their virtues, begged for votes, and greatly and strangely did the youngest of them enlarge his knowledge of his countrymen. But he had an insatiable appetite, and except in relation to Mr. Cougham, considerable tolerance. With Cougham, he was like a young hound in the leash. They had to run as twins; but Beauchamp's conjunct would not run, he would walk. He imposed his experience on Beauchamp, with an assumption that it must necessarily be taken for the law of Beauchamp's reason in electoral and in political affairs, and this was hard on Beauchamp, who had faith in his reason. Beauchamp's early canvassing brought Cougham down to Bevisham earlier than usual in the days when he and Seymour Austin divided the borough, and he inclined to administer correction to the Radically-disposed youngster. 'Yes, I have gone all over that,' he said, in speech sometimes, in manner perpetually, upon the intrusion of an idea by his junior. Cougham also, Cougham had passed through his Radical phase, as one does on the road to wisdom. So the frog telleth tadpoles: he too has wriggled most preposterous of tails; and he has shoved a circular flat head into corners unadapted to its shape; and that the undeveloped one should dutifully listen to experience and accept guidance, is devoutly to be hoped. Alas! Beauchamp would not be taught that though they were yoked they stood at the opposite ends of the process of evolution.

The oddly coupled pair deplored, among their respective

friends, the disastrous Siamese twinship created by a haphazard improvident Liberal camp. Look at us! they said:—Beauchamp is a young demagogue; Cougham is chrysalis Tory. Such Liberals are the ruin of Liberalism; but of such must it be composed when there is no new cry to loosen floods. It was too late to think of an operation to divide them. They held the heart of the cause between them, were bound fast together, and had to go on. Beauchamp, with a furious tug of Radicalism, spoken or performed, pulled Cougham on his beam-ends. Cougham, to right himself, defined his Liberalism sharply from the politics of the pit, pointed to France and her Revolutions, washed his hands of excesses, and entirely overset Beauchamp. Seeing that he stood in the Liberal interest, the junior could not abandon the Liberal flag; so he seized it and bore it ahead of the time, there where Radicals trip their phantom dances like shadows on a fog, and waved it as the very flag of our perfectible race. So great was the impetus that Cougham had no choice but to step out with him briskly—voluntarily as a man propelled by a hand on his coat-collar. A word saved him: the word practical. 'Are we practical?' he inquired, and shivered Beauchamp's galloping frame with a violent application of the stop abrupt; for that question, 'Are we practical?' penetrates the bosom of an English audience, and will surely elicit a response if not plaudits. Practical or not, the good people affectingly wish to be thought practical. It has been asked by them: If we 're not practical, what are we?—Beauchamp, talking to Cougham apart, would argue that the daring and the far-sighted course was often the most practical. Cougham extended a deprecating hand: 'Yes, I have gone over all that.' Occasionally he was maddening.

The melancholy position of the senior and junior Liberals was known abroad and matter of derision.

It happened that the gay and good-humoured young Lord Palmet, heir to the earldom of Elsea, walking up the High Street of Bevisham, met Beauchamp on Tuesday morning as he sallied out of his hotel to canvass. Lord Palmet was one of the numerous half-friends of Cecil Baskelett, and it may be a revelation of his character to you, that he owned to liking Beauchamp because of his having always been a favourite with the women. He began chattering, with Beauchamp's hand in his: 'I 've hit on you, have I? My dear fellow, Miss Halkett was talking of you last night. I slept at Mount Laurels; went on purpose to have a peep. I 'm bound for Itchincope. They 've some grand procession in view there; Lespel wrote for my team; I suspect he 's for starting some new October races. He talks of half-a-dozen drags. He must have lots of women there. I *say*, what a splendid creature Cissy Halkett has shot up! She topped the season this year, and will next. You 're for the darkies, Beauchamp. So am I, when I don't see a blonde; just as a fellow admires a girl when there 's no married woman or widow in sight. And, I say, it can't be true you 've gone in for that crazy Radicalism? There 's nothing to be gained by it, you know; the women hate it! A married blonde of five-and-twenty 's the Venus of them all. Mind you, I don't forget that Mrs. Wardour-Devereux is a thorough-paced brunette; but, upon my honour, I 'd bet on Cissy Halkett at forty. "A dark eye in woman," if you like, but blue and auburn drive it into a corner.'

Lord Palmet concluded by asking Beauchamp what he was doing and whither going.

Beauchamp proposed to him maliciously, as one of our hereditary legislators, to come and see something of canvassing. Lord Palmet had no objection. 'Capital opportunity for a review of their women,' he remarked.

'I map the places for pretty women in England; some parts of Norfolk, and a spot or two in Cumberland and Wales, and the island over there, I know thoroughly. Those Jutes have turned out some splendid fair women. Devonshire 's worth a tour. My man Davis is in charge of my team, and he drives to Itchincope from Washwater station. I am independent; I 'll have an hour with you. Do you think much of the women here?'

Beauchamp had not noticed them.

Palmet observed that he should not have noticed anything else.

'But you are qualifying for the *Upper* House,' Beauchamp said in the tone of an encomium.

Palmet accepted the statement. 'Though I shall never care to figure before peeresses,' he said. 'I can't tell you why. There 's a heavy sprinkling of the old bird among them. It isn't that. There 's too much plumage; I think it must be that. A cloud of millinery shoots me off a mile from a woman. In my opinion, witches are the only ones for wearing jewels without chilling the feminine atmosphere about them. Fellows think differently.' Lord Palmet waved a hand expressive of purely amiable tolerance, for this question upon the most important topic of human affairs was deep, and no judgement should be hasty in settling it. 'I 'm peculiar,' he resumed. 'A rose and a string of pearls: a woman who goes beyond that 's in danger of petrifying herself and her fellow man. Two women in Paris, last winter, set us on fire with pale thin gold ornaments—neck, wrists, ears, ruche, skirts, all in a flutter, and so were you. But you felt witchcraft. "The magical Orient," Vivian Ducie called the blonde, and the dark beauty, "Young Endor."'

'Her name?' said Beauchamp.

'A marquise; I forget her name. The other was

Countess Rastaglione; you must have heard of her; a towering witch, an empress, Helen of Troy; though Ducie would have it the brunette was Queen of *Paris*. For French taste, if you like.'

Countess Rastaglione was a lady enamelled on the scroll of Fame. 'Did you see them together?' said Beauchamp. 'They weren't together?'

Palmet looked at him and laughed. 'You 're yourself again, are you? Go to Paris in January, and cut out the Frenchmen.'

'Answer me, Palmet: they weren't in couples?'

'I fancy not. It was luck to meet them, so they couldn't have been.'

'Did you dance with either of them?'

Unable to state accurately that he had, Palmet cried, 'Oh! for dancing, the Frenchwoman beat the Italian.'

'Did you see her often—more than once?'

'My dear fellow, I went everywhere to see her: balls, theatres, promenades, rides, churches.'

'And you say she dressed up to the Italian, to challenge her, rival her?'

'Only one night; simple accident. Everybody noticed it, for they stood for Night and Day,—both hung with gold; the brunette Etruscan, and the blonde Asiatic; and every Frenchman present was epigramizing up and down the rooms like mad.'

'Her husband 's Legitimist; he wouldn't be at the Tuileries?' Beauchamp spoke half to himself.

'What, then, what?' Palmet stared and chuckled. 'Her husband must have taken the Tuileries' bait, if we mean the same woman. My dear old Beauchamp, have I seen her, then? She 's a darling! The Rastaglione was nothing to her. When you do light on a grand smoky pearl, the milky ones may go and decorate plaster. That 's what I say of the loveliest brunettes. It must

be the same: there can't be a couple of dark beauties in Paris without a noise about them. Marquise——? I shall recollect her name presently.'

'Here 's one of the houses I stop at,' said Beauchamp, 'and drop that subject.'

A scared servant-girl brought out her wizened mistress to confront the candidate, and to this representative of the sex he addressed his arts of persuasion, requesting her to repeat his words to her husband. The contrast between Beauchamp palpably canvassing and the Beauchamp who was the lover of the Marquise of the forgotten name, struck too powerfully on Palmet for his gravity: he retreated.

Beauchamp found him sauntering on the pavement, and would have dismissed him but for an agreeable diversion that occurred at that moment. A suavely smiling unctuous old gentleman advanced to them, bowing, and presuming thus far, he said, under the supposition that he was accosting the junior Liberal candidate for the borough. He announced his name and his principles: Tomlinson, progressive Liberal.

'A true distinction from some Liberals I know,' said Beauchamp.

Mr. Tomlinson hoped so. Never, he said, did he leave it to the man of his choice at an election to knock at his door for the vote.

Beauchamp looked as if he had swallowed a cordial. Votes falling into his lap are heavenly gifts to the candidate sick of the knocker and the bell. Mr. Tomlinson eulogized the manly candour of the junior Liberal candidate's address, in which he professed to see ideas that distinguished it from the address of the sound but otherwise conventional Liberal, Mr. Cougham. He muttered of plumping for Beauchamp. 'Don't plump,' Beauchamp said; and a candidate, if he would be an

honourable twin, must say it. Cougham had cautioned him against the heresy of plumping.

They discoursed of the poor and their beverages, of pot-houses, of the anti-liquorites, and of the duties of parsons, and the value of a robust and right-minded body of the poor to the country. Palmet found himself following them into a tolerably spacious house that he took to be the old gentleman's until some of the apparatus of an Institute for literary and scientific instruction revealed itself to him, and he heard Mr. Tomlinson exalt the memory of one Wingham for the blessing bequeathed by him to the town of Bevisham. 'For,' said Mr. Tomlinson, 'it is open to both sexes, to all respectable classes, from ten in the morning up to ten at night. Such a place affords us, I would venture to say, the advantages without the seductions of a Club. I rank it next—at a far remove, but next—the church.'

Lord Palmet brought his eyes down from the busts of certain worthies ranged along the top of the book-shelves to the cushioned chairs, and murmured, 'Capital place for an appointment with a woman.'

Mr. Tomlinson gazed up at him mildly, with a fallen countenance. He turned sadly agape in silence to the busts, the books, and the range of scientific instruments, and directed a gaze under his eyebrows at Beauchamp. 'Does your friend canvass with you?' he inquired.

'I want him to taste it,' Beauchamp replied, and immediately introduced the affable young lord—a proceeding marked by some of the dexterity he had once been famous for, as was shown by a subsequent observation of Mr. Tomlinson's:

'Yes,' he said, on the question of classes, 'yes, I fear we have classes in this country whose habitual levity sharp experience will have to correct. I very much fear it.'

'But if you have classes that are not to face realities—

classes that look on them from the box-seats of a theatre,' said Beauchamp, 'how can you expect perfect seriousness, or any good service whatever?'

'Gently, sir, gently. No; we can, I feel confident, expand within the limits of our most excellent and approved Constitution. I could wish that socially . . . that is all.'

'Socially and politically mean one thing in the end,' said Beauchamp. 'If you have a nation politically corrupt, you won't have a good state of morals in it, and the laws that keep society together bear upon the politics of a country.'

'True; yes,' Mr. Tomlinson hesitated assent. He dissociated Beauchamp from Lord Palmet, but felt keenly that the latter's presence desecrated Wingham's Institute, and he informed the candidate that he thought he would no longer detain him from his labours.

'Just the sort of place wanted in every provincial town,' Palmet remarked by way of a parting compliment.

Mr. Tomlinson bowed a civil acknowledgement of his having again spoken.

No further mention was made of the miraculous vote which had risen responsive to the candidate's address of its own inspired motion; so Beauchamp said, 'I beg you to bear in mind that I request you not to plump.'

'You may be right, Captain Beauchamp. Good day, sir.'

Palmet strode after Beauchamp into the street.

'Why did you set me bowing to that old boy?' he asked.

'Why did you talk about women?' was the rejoinder.

'Oh, aha!' Palmet sang to himself. 'You 're a Romfrey, Beauchamp. A blow for a blow! But I only said what would strike every fellow first off. It *is* the place;

the very place. Pastry-cooks' shops won't stand comparison with it. Don't tell me you 're the man not to see how much a woman prefers to be under the wing of science and literature, in a good-sized, well-warmed room, with a book, instead of making believe, with a red face, over a tart.'

He received a smart lecture from Beauchamp, and began to think he had enough of canvassing. But he was not suffered to escape. For his instruction, for his positive and extreme good, Beauchamp determined that the heir to an earldom should have a day's lesson. We will hope there was no intention to punish him for having frozen the genial current of Mr. Tomlinson's vote and interest; and it may be that he clung to one who had, as he imagined, seen Renée. Accompanied by a Mr. Oggler, a tradesman of the town, on the Liberal committee, dressed in a pea-jacket and proudly nautical, they applied for the vote, and found it oftener than beauty. Palmet contrasted his repeated disappointments with the scoring of two, three, four and more in the candidate's list, and informed him that he would certainly get the Election. 'I think you 're sure of it,' he said. 'There 's not a pretty woman to be seen; not one.'

One came up to them, the sight of whom counselled Lord Palmet to reconsider his verdict. She was addressed by Beauchamp as Miss Denham, and soon passed on.

Palmet was guilty of staring at her, and of lingering behind the others for a last look at her.

They were on the steps of a voter's house, calmly enduring a rebuff from him in person, when Palmet returned to them, exclaiming effusively, 'What luck you have, Beauchamp!' He stopped till the applicants descended the steps, with the voice of the voter ringing contempt as well

as refusal in their ears; then continued: 'You introduced me neck and heels to that undertakerly old Tomlinson, of Wingham's Institute; you might have given me a chance with that Miss—Miss Denham, was it? She has a bit of a style!'

'She has a head,' said Beauchamp.

'A girl like that may have what she likes. I don't care what she has—there 's woman in her. You might take her for a younger sister of Mrs. Wardour-Devereux. Who 's the uncle she speaks of? She ought not to be allowed to walk out by herself.'

'She can take care of herself,' said Beauchamp.

Palmet denied it. 'No woman can. Upon my honour, it 's a shame that she should be out alone. What are her people? I 'll run—from you, you know—and see her safe home. There 's such an infernal lot of fellows about; and a girl simply bewitching and unprotected! I ought to be after her.'

Beauchamp held him firmly to the task of canvassing.

'Then will you tell me where she lives?' Palmet stipulated. He reproached Beauchamp for a notorious Grand Turk exclusiveness and greediness in regard to women, as well as a disposition to run hard races for them out of a spirit of pure rivalry.

'It 's no use contradicting, it 's universally known of you,' reiterated Palmet. 'I could name a dozen women, and dozens of fellows you deliberately set yourself to cut out, for the honour of it. What 's that story they tell of you in one of the American cities or watering-places, North or South? You would dance at a ball a dozen times with a girl engaged to a man—who drenched you with a tumbler at the hotel bar, and off you all marched to the sands and exchanged shots from revolvers; and both of you, they say, saw the body of a drowned sailor in the water, in the moonlight, heaving nearer and nearer,

and you stretched your man just as the body was flung up by a wave between you. Picturesque, if you like!'

'Dramatic, certainly. And I ran away with the bride next morning?'

'No!' roared Palmet; 'you didn't. There 's the cruelty of the whole affair.'

Beauchamp laughed. 'An old messmate of mine, Lieutenant Jack Wilmore, can give you a different version of the story. I never have fought a duel, and never will. Here we are at the shop of a tough voter, Mr. Oggler. So it says in my note-book. Shall we put Lord Palmet to speak to him first?'

'If his lordship will put his heart into what he says,' Mr. Oggler bowed. 'Are you for giving the people recreation on a Sunday, my lord?'

'Trap-bat and ball, cricket, dancing, military bands, puppet-shows, theatres, merry-go-rounds, bosky dells—anything to make them happy,' said Palmet.

'Oh, dear! then I 'm afraid we cannot ask you to speak to this Mr. Carpendike.' Oggler shook his head.

'Does the fellow want the people to be miserable?'

'I 'm afraid, my lord, he would rather see them miserable.'

They introduced themselves to Mr. Carpendike in his shop. He was a flat-chested, sallow young shoemaker, with a shelving forehead, who seeing three gentlemen enter to him recognized at once with a practised resignation that they had not come to order shoe-leather, though he would fain have shod them, being needy; but it was not the design of Providence that they should so come as he in his blindness would have had them. Admitting this he wished for nothing.

The battle with Carpendike lasted three-quarters of an hour, during which he was chiefly and most effectively silent. Carpendike would not vote for a man that

proposed to open museums on the Sabbath day. The striking simile of the thin end of the wedge was recurred to by him for a damning illustration. Captain Beauchamp might be honest in putting his mind on most questions in his address, when there was no demand upon him to do it; but honesty was no antidote to impiety. Thus Carpendike.

As to Sunday museuming being an antidote to the pothouse—no. For the people knew the frequenting of the pothouse to be a vice; it was a temptation of Satan that often in overcoming them was the cause of their flying back to grace: whereas museums and picture galleries were insidious attractions cloaked by the name of virtue, whereby they were allured to abandon worship.

Beauchamp flew at this young monster of unreason: 'But the people are *not* worshipping; they are idling and sotting, and if you carry your despotism farther still, and shut them out of every shop on Sundays, do you suppose you promote the spirit of worship? If you don't revolt them you unman them, and I warn you we can't afford to destroy what manhood remains to us in England. Look at the facts.'

He flung the facts at Carpendike with the natural exaggeration of them which eloquence produces, rather, as a rule, to assure itself in passing of the overwhelming justice of the cause it pleads than to deceive the adversary. Brewers' beer and publicans' beer, wife-beatings, the homes and the blood of the people, were matters reviewed to the confusion of Sabbatarians.

Carpendike listened with a bent head, upraised eyes, and brows wrinkling far on to his poll: a picture of a mind entrenched beyond the potentialities of mortal assault. He signified that he had spoken. Indeed Beauchamp's reply was vain to one whose argument was that he considered the people nearer to holiness in the

indulging of an evil propensity than in satisfying a harmless curiosity and getting a recreation. The Sabbath claimed them; if they were disobedient, Sin ultimately might scourge them back to the fold, but never if they were permitted to regard themselves as innocent in their backsliding and rebelliousness.

Such language was quite new to Beauchamp. The parsons he had spoken to were of one voice in objecting to the pothouse. He appealed to Carpendike's humanity. Carpendike smote him with a text from Scripture.

'Devilish cold in this shop,' muttered Palmet.

Two not flourishing little children of the emaciated Puritan burst into the shop, followed by their mother, carrying a child in her arms. She had a sad look, upon traces of a past fairness, vaguely like a snow landscape in the thaw. Palmet stooped to toss shillings with her young ones, that he might avoid the woman's face. It cramped his heart.

'Don't you see, Mr. Carpendike,' said fat Mr. Oggler, 'it 's the happiness of the people we want; that 's what Captain Beauchamp works for—their happiness; that 's the aim of life for all of us. Look at me! I 'm as happy as the day. I pray every night, and I go to church every Sunday, and I never know what it is to be unhappy. The Lord has blessed me with a good digestion, healthy pious children, and a prosperous shop that 's a competency—a modest one, but I make it satisfy me, because I know it 's the Lord's gift. Well, now, and I hate Sabbath-breakers; I would punish them; and I 'm against the public-houses on a Sunday; but aboard my little yacht, say on a Sunday morning in the Channel, I don't forget I owe it to the Lord that he has been good enough to put me in the way of keeping a yacht; no; I read prayers to my crew, and a chapter in the Bible—Genesis, Deuteronomy, Kings, Acts, Paul, just as it comes. All 's good

that 's there. Then we 're free for the day! man, boy, and me; we cook our victuals, and we *must* look to the yacht, do you see. But we 've made our peace with the Almighty. We know that. He don't mind the working of the vessel so long as we 've remembered him. He put us in that situation, exactly there, latitude and longitude, do you see, and work the vessel we must. And a glass of grog and a pipe after dinner, can't be any offence. And I tell you, honestly and sincerely, I 'm sure my conscience is good, and I really and truly don't know what it is *not* to know happiness.'

'Then you don't know God,' said Carpendike, like a voice from a cave.

'Or nature: or the state of the world,' said Beauchamp, singularly impressed to find himself between two men, of whom—each perforce of his tenuity and the evident leaning of his appetites—one was for the barren black view of existence, the other for the fantastically bright. As to the men personally, he chose Carpendike, for all his obstinacy and sourness. Oggler's genial piety made him shrink with nausea.

But Lord Palmet paid Mr. Oggler a memorable compliment, by assuring him that he was altogether of his way of thinking about happiness.

The frank young nobleman did not withhold a reference to the two or three things essential to his happiness; otherwise Mr. Oggler might have been pleased and flattered.

Before quitting the shop, Beauchamp warned Carpendike that he should come again. 'Vote or no vote, you 're worth the trial. Texts as many as you like. I 'll make your faith active, if it 's alive at all. You speak of the Lord loving his own; you make out the Lord to be *your* own, and use your religion like a drug. So it appears to me. That Sunday tyranny of yours has to be defended.

Remember that; for I for one shall combat it and expose it. Good day.'

Beauchamp continued, in the street: 'Tyrannies like this fellow's have made the English the dullest and wretchedest people in Europe.'

Palmet animadverted on Carpendike: 'The dog looks like a deadly fungus that has poisoned the woman.'

'I 'd trust him with a post of danger, though,' said Beauchamp.

Before the candidate had opened his mouth to the next elector he was beamed on. M'Gilliper, baker, a floured brick face, leaned on folded arms across his counter and said, in Scotch: 'My vote? and he that asks me for my vote is the man who, when he was midshipman, saved the life of a relation of mine from death by drowning!—my wife's first cousin, Johnny Brownson—and held him up four to five minutes in the water, and never left him till he was out of danger! There 's my hand on it, I will, and a score of householders in Bevisham the same.' He dictated precious names and addresses to Beauchamp, and was curtly thanked for his pains.

Such treatment of a favourable voter seemed odd to Palmet.

'Oh, a vote given for reasons of sentiment!' Beauchamp interjected.

Palmet reflected and said: 'Well, perhaps that 's how it is women don't care uncommonly for the men who love them, though they like precious well to be loved. Opposition does it.'

'You have discovered my likeness to women,' said Beauchamp, eyeing him critically, and then thinking, with a sudden warmth, that he had seen Renée: 'Look here, Palmet, you 're too late for Itchincope, to-day; come and eat fish and meat with me at my hotel, and come to a meeting after it. You can run by rail to Itchincope

to breakfast in the morning, and I may come with you. You 'll hear one or two men speak well to-night.'

'I suppose I shall have to be at this business myself some day,' sighed Palmet. 'Any women on the platform? Oh, but political women! And the Tories get the pick of the women. No, I don't think I 'll stay. Yes, I will; I 'll go through with it. I like to be learning something. You wouldn't think it of me, Beauchamp, but I envy fellows at work.'

'You might make a speech for me, Palmet.'

'No man better, my dear fellow, if it were proposing a toast to the poor devils and asking them to drink it. But a dry speech, like leading them over the desert without a well to cheer them—no oasis, as we used to call a five-pound note and a holiday—I haven't the heart for that. Is your Miss Denham a Radical?'

Beauchamp asserted that he had not yet met a woman at all inclining in the direction of Radicalism. 'I don't call furies Radicals. There may be women who think as well as feel; I don't know them.'

'Lots of them, Beauchamp. Take my word for it. I do know women. They haven't a shift, nor a trick, I don't know. They 're as clear to me as glass. I 'll wager your Miss Denham goes to the meetings. Now, doesn't she? Of course she does. And there couldn't be a gallanter way of spending an evening, so I 'll try it. Nothing to repent of next morning! That 's to be said for politics, Beauchamp, and I confess I 'm rather jealous of you. A thoroughly good-looking girl who takes to a fellow for what he 's doing in the world, must have ideas of him precious different from the adoration of six feet three and a fine seat in the saddle. I see that. There 's Baskelett in the Blues; and if I were he I should detest my cuirass and helmet, for if he 's half as successful as he boasts—it 's the uniform.'

Two notorious Radicals, Peter Molyneux and Samuel Killick, were called on. The first saw Beauchamp and refused him; the second declined to see him. He was amazed and staggered, but said little.

Among the remainder of the electors of Bevisham, roused that day to a sense of their independence by the summons of the candidates, only one man made himself conspicuous, by premising that he had two important questions to ask, and he trusted Commander Beauchamp to answer them unreservedly. They were: first, What is a FRENCH MARQUEES? and second: Who was EURYDICEY?

Beauchamp referred him to the Tory camp, whence the placard alluding to those ladies had issued.

'Both of them 's ladies! I guessed it,' said the elector.

'Did you guess that one of them is a mythological lady?'

'I 'm not far wrong in guessing t 'other 's not much better, I reckon. Now, sir, may I ask you, is there any tale concerning your morals?'

'No: you may not ask; you take a liberty.'

'Then I 'll take the liberty to postpone talking about my vote. Look here, Mr. Commander; if the upper classes want anything of me and come to me for it, I 'll know what sort of an example they 're setting; now that 's me.'

'You pay attention to a stupid Tory squib?'

'Where there 's smoke there 's fire, sir.'

Beauchamp glanced at his note-book for the name of this man, who was a ragman and dustman.

'My private character has nothing whatever to do with my politics,' he said, and had barely said it when he remembered having spoken somewhat differently, upon the abstract consideration of the case, to Mr. Tomlinson.

'You 're quite welcome to examine my character for yourself, only I don't consent to be catechized. Understand that.'

'You quite understand that, Mr. Tripehallow,' said Oggler, bolder in taking up the strange name than Beauchamp had been.

'I understand that. But you understand, there 's never been a word against the morals of Mr. Cougham. Here 's the point: Do we mean to be a moral country? Very well, then so let our representatives be, I say. And if I hear nothing against your morals, Mr. Commander, I don't say you shan't have my vote. I mean to deliberate. You young nobs capering over our heads—I nail you down to morals. Politics secondary. Adew, as the dying spirit remarked to weeping friends.'

'Au revoir—would have been kinder,' said Palmet.

Mr. Tripehallow smiled roguishly, to betoken comprehension.

Beauchamp asked Mr. Oggler whether that fellow was to be taken for a humourist or a five-pound-note man.

'It may be both, sir. I know he 's called Morality Joseph.'

An all but acknowledged five-pound-note man was the last they visited. He cut short the preliminaries of the interview by saying that he was a four-o'clock man; *i.e.* the man who waited for the final bids to him upon the closing hour of the election day.

'Not one farthing!' said Beauchamp, having been warned beforehand of the signification of the phrase by his canvassing lieutenant.

'Then you 're nowhere,' the honest fellow replied in the mystic tongue of prophecy.

Palmet and Beauchamp went to their fish and meat; smoked a cigarette or two afterward, conjured away the smell of tobacco from their persons as well as they could,

and betook themselves to the assembly-room of the Liberal party, where the young lord had an opportunity of beholding Mr. Cougham, and of listening to him for an hour and forty minutes. He heard Mr. Timothy Turbot likewise. And Miss Denham was present. Lord Palmet applauded when she smiled. When she looked attentive he was deeply studious. Her expression of fatigue under the sonorous ring of statistics poured out from Cougham was translated by Palmet into yawns and sighs of a profoundly fraternal sympathy. Her face quickened on the rising of Beauchamp to speak. She kept eye on him all the while, as Palmet, with the skill of an adept in disguising his petty larceny of the optics, did on her. Twice or thrice she looked pained: Beauchamp was hesitating for the word. Once she looked startled and shut her eyes: a hiss had sounded; Beauchamp sprang on it as if enlivened by hostility, and dominated the factious note. Thereat she turned to a gentleman sitting beside her; apparently they agreed that some incident had occurred characteristic of Nevil Beauchamp; for whom, however, it was not a brilliant evening. He was very well able to account for it, and did so, after he had walked a few steps with Miss Denham on her homeward way.

'You heard Cougham, Palmet! He 's my senior, and I 'm obliged to come second to him, and how am I to have a chance when he has drenched the audience for close upon a couple of hours!'

Palmet mimicked the manner of Cougham.

'They cry for Turbot naturally; they want a relief,' Beauchamp groaned.

Palmet gave an imitation of Timothy Turbot.

He was an admirable mimic, perfectly spontaneous, without stressing any points, and Beauchamp was provoked to laugh his discontentment with the evening out of recollection.

But a grave matter troubled Palmet's head.

'Who was that fellow who walked off with Miss Denham?'

'A married man,' said Beauchamp: 'badly married; more 's the pity; he has a wife in the madhouse. His name is Lydiard.'

'Not her brother! Where 's her uncle?'

'She won't let him come to these meetings. It 's her idea; well intended, but wrong, I think. She 's afraid that Dr. Shrapnel will alarm the moderate Liberals and damage Radical me.'

Palmet muttered between his teeth, 'What queer things they let their women do!' He felt compelled to say, 'Odd for her to be walking home at night with a fellow like that.'

It chimed too consonantly with a feeling of Beauchamp's, to repress which he replied: 'Your ideas about women are simply barbarous, Palmet. Why shouldn't she? Her uncle places his confidence in the man, and in her. Isn't that better—ten times more likely to call out the sense of honour and loyalty, than the distrust and the scandal going on in your class?'

'Please to say yours too.'

'I 've no class. I say that the education for women is to teach them to rely on themselves.'

'Ah! well, I don't object, if I 'm the man.'

'Because you and your set are absolutely uncivilized in your views of women.'

'Common sense, Beauchamp!'

'Prey. You eye them as prey. And it comes of an idle aristocracy. You have no faith in them, and they repay you for your suspicion.'

'All the same, Beauchamp, she ought not to be allowed to go about at night with that fellow. "Rich and rare were the gems she wore": but that was in Erin's isle,

and if we knew the whole history, she 'd better have stopped at home. She 's marvellously pretty, to my mind. She looks a high-bred wench. Odd it is, Beauchamp, to see a lady's-maid now and then catch the style of my lady. No, by Jove! I 've known one or two—you couldn't tell the difference! Not till you were intimate. I know one would walk a minuet with a duchess. Of course—all the worse for her. If you see that uncle of Miss Denham's—upon my honour, I should advise him: I mean, counsel him not to trust her with any fellow but you.'

Beauchamp asked Lord Palmet how old he was.

Palmet gave his age; correcting the figures from six-and-twenty to one year more. 'And never did a stroke of work in my life,' he said, speaking genially out of an acute guess at the sentiments of the man he walked with.

It seemed a farcical state of things.

There was a kind of contrition in Palmet's voice, and to put him at his ease, as well as to stamp something in his own mind, Beauchamp said: 'It 's common enough.'

CHAPTER XX

A DAY AT ITCHINCOPE

An election in Bevisham was always an exciting period at Itchincope, the large and influential old estate of the Lespels, which at one time, with but a ceremonious drive through the town, sent you two good Whig men to Parliament to sit at Reform banquets; two unswerving party men, blest subscribers to the right Review, and personally proud of its trenchancy. Mr. Grancey Lespel was the survivor of them, and well could he remember the happier

day of his grandfather, his father, and his own hot youth. He could be carried so far by affectionate regrets as to think of the Tories of that day benignly:—when his champion Review of the orange and blue livery waved a wondrous sharp knife, and stuck and bled them, proving to his party, by trenchancy alone, that the Whig was the cause of Providence. Then politics presented you a table whereat two parties feasted, with no fear of the intrusion of a third, and your backs were turned on the noisy lower world, your ears were deaf to it.

Apply we now the knocker to the door of venerable Quotation, and call the aged creature forth, that he, half choked by his eheu!—

'A sound between a sigh and bray,'

may pronounce the familiar but respectable words, the burial-service of a time so happy!

Mr. Grancey Lespel would still have been sitting for Bevisham (or politely at this elective moment bowing to resume the seat) had not those Manchester jugglers caught up his cry, appropriated his colours, displaced and impersonated him, acting beneficent Whig on a scale approaching treason to the Constitution; leaning on the people in earnest, instead of taking the popular shoulder for a temporary lift, all in high party policy, for the clever manœuvre, to oust the Tory and sway the realm. See the consequences. For power, for no other consideration, those manufacturing rascals have raised Radicalism from its primæval mire—from its petty backslum bookseller's shop and public-house back-parlour effluvia of oratory—to issue dictates in England, and we, England, formerly the oak, are topsy-turvy, like onions, our heels in the air!

The language of party is eloquent, and famous for being grand at illustration; but it is equally well known that much of it gives us humble ideas of the speaker,

probably because of the naughty temper party is prone to; which, while endowing it with vehemence, lessens the stout circumferential view that should be taken, at least historically. Indeed, though we admit party to be the soundest method for conducting us, party talk soon expends its attractiveness, as would a summer's afternoon given up to the contemplation of an encounter of rams' heads. Let us be quit of Mr. Grancey Lespel's lamentations. The Whig gentleman had some reason to complain. He had been trained to expect no other attack than that of his hereditary adversary-ram in front, and a sham ram—no honest animal, but a ramming engine rather—had attacked him in the rear. Like Mr. Everard Romfrey and other Whigs, he was profoundly chagrined by popular ingratitude: 'not the same man,' his wife said of him. It nipped him early. He took to proverbs; sure sign of the sere leaf in a man's mind.

His wife reproached the people for their behaviour to him bitterly. The lady regarded politics as a business that helped hunting-men a stage above sportsmen, for numbers of the politicians she was acquainted with were hunting-men, yet something more by virtue of the variety they could introduce into a conversation ordinarily treating of sport and the qualities of wines. Her husband seemed to have lost in that Parliamentary seat the talisman which gave him notions distinguishing him from country squires; he had sunk, and he no longer cared for the months in London, nor for the speeches she read to him to re-awaken his mind and make him look out of himself, as he had done when he was a younger man and not a suspended Whig. Her own favourite reading was of love-adventures written in the French tongue. She had once been in love, and could be so sympathetic with that passion as to avow to Cecilia Halkett a tenderness for Nevil Beauchamp, on account of his relations with the

Marquise de Rouaillout, and notwithstanding the demoniacal flame-halo of the Radical encircling him.

The allusion to Beauchamp occurred a few hours after Cecilia's arrival at Itchincope.

Cecilia begged for the French lady's name to be repeated; she had not heard it before, and she tasted the strange bitter relish of realization when it struck her ear to confirm a story that she believed indeed, but had not quite sensibly felt.

'And it is not over yet, they say,' Mrs. Grancey Lespel added, while softly flipping some spots of the colour proper to radicals in morals on the fame of the French lady. She possessed fully the grave judicial spirit of her countrywomen, and could sit in judgement on the personages of tales which had entranced her, to condemn the heroines: it was impolitic in her sex to pity females. As for the men—poor weak things! As for Nevil Beauchamp, in particular, his case, this penetrating lady said, was clear: he ought to be married. 'Could *you* make a sacrifice?' she asked Cecilia playfully.

'Nevil Beauchamp and I are old friends, but we have agreed that we are deadly political enemies,' Miss Halkett replied.

'It is not so bad for a beginning,' said Mrs. Lespel.

'If one were disposed to martyrdom.'

The older woman nodded. 'Without that.'

'My dear Mrs. Lespel, wait till you have heard him. He is at war with everything we venerate and build on. The wife you would give him should be a creature rooted in nothing—in sea-water. Simply two or three conversations with him have made me uncomfortable ever since; I can see nothing durable; I dream of surprises, outbreaks, dreadful events. At least it is perfectly true that I do not look with the same eyes on my country. He seems to delight in destroying one's peaceful

contemplation of life. The truth is that he blows a perpetual gale, and is all agitation,' Cecilia concluded, affecting with a smile a slight shiver.

'Yes, one tires of that,' said Mrs. Lespel. 'I was determined I would have him here if we could get him to come. Grancey objected. We shall have to manage Captain Beauchamp and the rest as well. He is sure to come late to-morrow, and will leave early on Thursday morning for his canvass; our driving into Bevisham is for Friday or Saturday. I do not see that he need have any suspicions. Those verses you are so angry about cannot be traced to Itchincope. My dear, they are a childish trifle. When my husband stood first for Bevisham, the whole of his University life appeared in print. What we have to do is to forewarn the gentlemen to be guarded, and especially in what they say to my nephew Lord Palmet, for that boy cannot keep a secret; he is as open as a plate.'

'The smoking-room at night?' Cecilia suggested, remembering her father's words about Itchincope's tobacco-hall.

'They have Captain Beauchamp's address hung up there, I have heard,' said Mrs. Lespel. 'There may be other things—another address, though it is not yet placarded. Come with me. For fifteen years I have never once put my head into that room, and now I 've a superstitious fear about it.'

Mrs. Lespel led the way to the deserted smoking-room, where the stale reek of tobacco assailed the ladies, as does that dire place of Customs the stranger visiting savage (or too-natural) potentates.

In silence they tore down from the wall Beauchamp's electoral Address—flanked all its length with satirical pen and pencil comments and sketches; and they consigned to flames the vast sheet of animated verses relating

to the French Marquees. A quarter-size chalk-drawing of a slippered pantaloon having a duck on his shoulder, labelled to say 'Quack-quack,' and offering our nauseated Dame Britannia (or else it was the widow Bevisham) a globe of a pill to swallow, crossed with the consolatory and reassuring name of *Shrapnel*, they disposed of likewise. And then they fled, chased forth either by the brilliancy of the politically allusive epigrams profusely inscribed around them on the walls, or by the atmosphere. Mrs. Lespel gave her orders for the walls to be scraped, and said to Cecilia: 'A strange air to breathe, was it not? The less men and women know of one another, the happier for them. I knew my superstition was correct as a guide to me. I do so much wish to respect men, and all my experience tells me the Turks know best how to preserve it for us. Two men in this house would give their wives for pipes, if it came to the choice. We might all go for a cellar of old wine. After forty, men have married their habits, and wives are only an item in the list, and not the most important.'

With the assistance of Mr. Stukely Culbrett, Mrs. Lespel prepared the house and those of the company who were in the secret of affairs for the arrival of Beauchamp. The ladies were curious to see him. The gentlemen, not anticipating extreme amusement, were calm: for it is an axiom in the world of buckskins and billiard-cues, that one man is very like another; and so true is it with them, that they can in time teach it to the fair sex. Friends of Cecil Baskelett predominated, and the absence of so sprightly a fellow was regretted seriously; but he was shooting with his uncle at Holdesbury, and they did not expect him before Thursday.

On Wednesday morning Lord Palmet presented himself at a remarkably well-attended breakfast-table at Itchincope. He passed from Mrs. Lespel to Mrs.

Wardour-Devereux and Miss Halkett, bowed to other ladies, shook hands with two or three men, and nodded over the heads of half-a-dozen, accounting rather mysteriously for his delay in coming, it was thought, until he sat down before a plate of Yorkshire pie, and said: 'The fact is I 've been canvassing hard. With Beauchamp!'

Astonishment and laughter surrounded him, and Palmet looked from face to face, equally astonished, and desirous to laugh too.

'Ernest! how could you do that?' said Mrs. Lespel; and her husband cried in stupefaction, 'With Beauchamp?'

'Oh! it 's because of the Radicalism,' Palmet murmured to himself. 'I didn't mind that.'

'What sort of a day did you have?' Mr. Culbrett asked him; and several gentlemen fell upon him for an account of the day.

Palmet grimaced over a mouthful of his pie.

'Bad!' quoth Mr. Lespel; 'I knew it. I know Bevisham. The only chance there is for five thousand pounds in a sack with a hole in it.'

'Bad for Beauchamp? Dear me, no'; Palmet corrected the error. 'He is carrying all before him. And he tells them,' Palmet mimicked Beauchamp, 'they shall not have one penny: not a farthing. I gave a couple of young ones a shilling apiece, and he rowed me for bribery; somehow I did wrong.'

Lord Palmet described the various unearthly characters he had inspected in their dens: Carpendike, Tripehallow, and the radicals Peter Molyneux and Samuel Killick, and the ex-member for the borough, Cougham, posing to suit sign-boards of Liberal inns, with a hand thrust in his waistcoat, and his head well up, the eyes running over the under-lids, after the traditional style

of our aristocracy; but perhaps more closely resembling an urchin on tiptoe peering above park-palings. Cougham's remark to Beauchamp, heard and repeated by Palmet with the object of giving an example of the senior Liberal's phraseology: 'I was necessitated to vacate my town mansion, to my material discomfort and that of my wife, whose equipage I have been compelled to take, by your premature canvass of the borough, Captain Beauchamp: and now, I hear, on undeniable authority, that no second opponent to us will be forthcoming':—this produced the greatest effect on the company.

'But do you tell me,' said Mr. Lespel, when the shouts of the gentlemen were subsiding, 'do you tell me that young Beauchamp is going ahead?'

'That he is. They flock to him in the street.'

'He stands there, then, and jingles a money-bag.'

Palmet resumed his mimicry of Beauchamp: 'Not a stiver; purity of election is the first condition of instruction to the people! Principles! Then they 've got a capital orator: Turbot, an Irishman. I went to a meeting last night, and heard him; never heard anything finer in my life. You may laugh—he whipped me off my legs; fellow spun me like a top; and while he was orationing, a donkey calls, "Turbot! ain't you a flat fish?" and he swings round, "Not for a fool's hook!" and out they hustled the villain for a Tory. I never saw anything like it.'

'That repartee wouldn't have done with a Dutchman or a Torbay trawler,' said Stukely Culbrett. 'But let us hear more.'

'Is it fair?' Miss Halkett murmured anxiously to Mrs. Lespel, who returned a flitting shrug.

'Charming women follow Beauchamp, you know,' Palmet proceeded, as he conceived, to confirm and

heighten the tale of success. 'There 's a Miss Denham, niece of a doctor, a Dr. . . . Shot—Shrapnel! a wonderfully good-looking, clever-looking girl, comes across him in half-a-dozen streets to ask how he 's getting on, and goes every night to his meetings, with a man who 's a writer and has a mad wife; a man named Lydia—no, that 's a woman—Lydiard. It 's rather a jumble; but you should see her when Beauchamp 's on his legs and speaking.'

'Mr. Lydiard is in Bevisham?' Mrs. Wardour-Devereux remarked.

'I know the girl,' growled Mr. Lespel. 'She comes with that rascally doctor and a bobtail of tea-drinking men and women and their brats to Northeden Heath—my ground. There they stand and sing.'

'Hymns?' inquired Mr. Culbrett.

'I don't know what they sing. And when it rains they take the liberty to step over my bank into my plantation. Some day I shall have them stepping into my house.'

'Yes, it 's Mr. Lydiard; I 'm sure of the man's name,' Palmet replied to Mrs. Wardour-Devereux.

'We met him in Spain the year before last,' she observed to Cecilia.

The 'we' reminded Palmet that her husband was present.

'Ah, Devereux, I didn't see you,' he nodded obliquely down the table. 'By the way, what 's the grand procession? I hear my man Davis has come all right, and I caught sight of the top of your coach-box in the stable-yard as I came in. What are we up to?'

'Baskelett writes, it 's to be for to-morrow morning at ten—the start.' Mr. Wardour-Devereux addressed the table generally. He was a fair, huge, bush-bearded man, with a voice of unvarying bass: a squire in his county,

and energetic in his pursuit of the pleasures of hunting, driving, travelling, and tobacco.

'Old Bask 's the captain of us? Very well, but where do we drive the teams? How many are we? What 's in hand?'

Cecilia threw a hurried glance at her hostess.

Luckily some witling said, 'Fours-in-hand!' and so dryly that it passed for humour, and gave Mrs. Lespel time to interpose. 'You are not to know till to-morrow, Ernest.'

Palmet had traced the authorship of the sally to Mr. Algy Borclick, and crowned him with praise for it. He asked, 'Why not know till to-morrow?' A word in a murmur from Mr. Culbrett, 'Don't frighten the women,' satisfied him, though why it should he could not have imagined.

Mrs. Lespel quitted the breakfast-table before the setting in of the dangerous five minutes of conversation over its ruins, and spoke to her husband, who contested the necessity for secresy, but yielded to her judgement when it was backed by Stukely Culbrett. Soon after Lord Palmet found himself encountered by evasions and witticisms, in spite of the absence of the ladies, upon every attempt he made to get some light regarding the destination of the four-in-hands next day.

'What are you going to do?' he said to Mr. Devereux, thinking him the likeliest one to grow confidential in private.

'Smoke,' resounded from the depths of that gentleman.

Palmet recollected the ground of division between the beautiful brunette and her lord—his addiction to the pipe in perpetuity, and deemed it sweeter to be with the lady.

She and Miss Halkett were walking in the garden.

Miss Halkett said to him: 'How wrong of you to

betray the secrets of your friend! Is he really making way?'

'Beauchamp will head the poll to a certainty,' Palmet replied.

'Still,' said Miss Halkett, 'you should not forget that you are not in the house of a Liberal. Did you canvass in the town or the suburbs?'

'Everywhere. I assure you, Miss Halkett, there 's a feeling for Beauchamp—they 're in love with him!'

'He promises them everything, I suppose?'

'Not he. And the odd thing is, it isn't the Radicals he catches. He won't go against the game laws for them, and he won't cut down army and navy. So the Radicals yell at him. One confessed he had sold his vote for five pounds last election: "you shall have it for the same," says he, "for you 're all humbugs." Beauchamp took him by the throat and shook him—metaphorically, you know. But as for the tradesmen, he 's their hero; bakers especially.'

'Mr. Austin may be right, then!' Cecilia reflected aloud.

She went to Mrs. Lespel to repeat what she had extracted from Palmet, after warning the latter not, in common loyalty, to converse about his canvass with Beauchamp.

'Did you speak of Mr. Lydiard as Captain Beauchamp's friend?' Mrs. Devereux inquired of him.

'Lydiard? why, he was the man who made off with that pretty Miss Denham,' said Palmet. 'I have the greatest trouble to remember them all; but it was not a day wasted. Now I know politics. Shall we ride or walk? You will let me have the happiness? I 'm so unlucky; I rarely meet you!'

'You will bring Captain Beauchamp to me the moment he comes?'

'I 'll bring him. Bring him? Nevil Beauchamp won't want bringing.'

Mrs. Devereux smiled with some pleasure.

Grancey Lespel, followed at some distance by Mr. Ferbrass, the Tory lawyer, stepped quickly up to Palmet, and asked whether Beauchamp had seen Dollikins, the brewer.

Palmet could recollect the name of one Tomlinson, and also the calling at a brewery. Moreover, Beauchamp had uttered contempt of the brewer's business, and of the social rule to accept rich brewers for gentlemen. The man's name might be Dollikins and not Tomlinson, and if so, it was Dollikins who would not see Beauchamp. To preserve his political importance, Palmet said, 'Dollikins! to be sure, that was the man.'

'Treats him as he does you,' Mr. Lespel turned to Ferbrass. 'I 've sent to Dollikins to come to me this morning, if he 's not driving into the town. I 'll have him before Beauchamp sees him. I 've asked half-a-dozen of these country gentlemen-tradesmen to lunch at my table to-day.'

'Then, sir,' observed Ferbrass, 'if they are men to be persuaded, they had better not see me.'

'True; they 're my old supporters, and mightn't like your Tory face,' Mr. Lespel assented.

Mr. Ferbrass congratulated him on the heartiness of his espousal of the Tory cause.

Mr. Lespel winced a little, and told him not to put his trust in that.

'Turned Tory?' said Palmet.

Mr. Lespel declined to answer.

Palmet said to Mrs. Devereux, 'He thinks I 'm not worth speaking to upon politics. Now I 'll give him some Beauchamp; I learned lots yesterday.'

'Then let it be in Captain Beauchamp's manner,' said she softly.

Palmet obeyed her commands with the liveliest exhibition of his peculiar faculty: Cecilia, rejoining them, seemed to hear Nevil himself in his emphatic political mood.—'Because the Whigs are defunct! They had no root in the people! Whig is the name of a tribe that was! You have Tory, Liberal, and Radical. There is no place for Whig. He is played out.'

'Who has been putting that nonsense into your head?' Mr. Lespel retorted. 'Go shooting, go shooting!'

Shots were heard in the woods. Palmet pricked up his ears; but he was taken out riding to act cavalier to Mrs. Devereux and Miss Halkett.

Cecilia corrected his enthusiasm with the situation. 'No flatteries to-day. There are hours when women feel their insignificance and helplessness. I begin to fear for Mr. Austin; and I find I can do nothing to aid him. My hands are tied. And yet I know I could win voters if only it were permissible for me to go and speak to them.'

'Win them!' cried Palmet, imagining the alacrity of men's votes to be won by her. He recommended a gallop for the chasing away of melancholy, and as they were on the Bevisham high road, which was bordered by strips of turf and heath, a few good stretches brought them on the fir-heights, commanding views of the town and broad water.

'No, I cannot enjoy it,' Cecilia said to Mrs. Devereux; 'I don't mind the grey light; cloud and water, and half-tones of colour, are homely English and pleasant, and that opal where the sun should be has a suggestiveness richer than sunlight. I 'm quite northern enough to understand it; but with me it must be either peace or strife, and that Election down there destroys my chance of peace. I

never could mix reverie with excitement; the battle must be over first, and the dead buried. Can you?'

Mrs. Devereux answered: 'Excitement? I am not sure that I know what it is. An Election does not excite me.'

'There 's Nevil Beauchamp himself!' Palmet sang out, and the ladies discerned Beauchamp under a fir-tree, down by the road, not alone. A man, increasing in length like a telescope gradually reaching its end for observation, and coming to the height of a landmark, as if raised by ropes, was rising from the ground beside him. 'Shall we trot on, Miss Halkett?'

Cecilia said, 'No.'

'Now I see a third fellow,' said Palmet. 'It 's the other fellow, the Denham—Shrapnel—Radical meeting . . . Lydiard 's his name: writes books.'

'We may as well ride on,' Mrs. Devereux remarked, and her horse fretted singularly.

Beauchamp perceived them, and lifted his hat. Palmet made demonstrations for the ladies. Still neither party moved nearer.

After some waiting, Cecilia proposed to turn back.

Mrs. Devereux looked into her eyes. 'I 'll take the lead,' she said, and started forward, pursued by Palmet. Cecilia followed at a sullen canter.

Before they came up to Beauchamp, the long-shanked man had stalked away townward. Lydiard held Beauchamp by the hand. Some last words, after the manner of instructions, passed between them, and then Lydiard also turned away.

'I say, Beauchamp, Mrs. Devereux wants to hear who that man is,' Palmet said, drawing up.

'That man is Dr. Shrapnel,' said Beauchamp, convinced that Cecilia had checked her horse at the sight of the doctor.

'Dr. Shrapnel,' Palmet informed Mrs. Devereux.

She looked at him to seek his wits, and returning Beauchamp's admiring salutation with a little bow and smile, said, 'I fancied it was a gentleman we met in Spain.'

'He writes books,' observed Palmet, to jog a slow intelligence.

'Pamphlets, you mean.'

'I think he is not a pamphleteer', Mrs. Devereux said.

'Mr. Lydiard, then, of course; how silly I am! How can you pardon me!' Beauchamp was contrite; he could not explain that a long guess he had made at Miss Halkett's reluctance to come up to him when Dr. Shrapnel was with him had preoccupied his mind. He sent off Palmet the bearer of a pretext for bringing Lydiard back, and then said to Cecilia, 'You recognized Dr. Shrapnel?'

'I thought it might be Dr. Shrapnel', she was candid enough to reply. 'I could not well recognize him, not knowing him.'

'Here comes Mr. Lydiard; and let me assure you, if I may take the liberty of introducing him, he is no true Radical. He is a philosopher—one of the flirts, the butterflies of politics, as Dr. Shrapnel calls them.'

Beauchamp hummed over some improvized trifles to Lydiard, then introduced him cursorily, and all walked in the direction of Itchincope. It was really the Mr. Lydiard Mrs. Devereux had met in Spain, so they were left in the rear to discuss their travels. Much conversation did not go on in front. Cecilia was very reserved. By-and-by she said, 'I am glad you have come into the country early to-day.'

He spoke rapturously of the fresh air, and not too mildly of his pleasure in meeting her. Quite off her guard, she began to hope he was getting to be one of them again, until she heard him tell Lord Palmet that he had

come early out of Bevisham for the walk with Dr. Shrapnel, and to call on certain rich tradesmen living near Itchincope. He mentioned the name of Dollikins.

'Dollikins?' Palmet consulted a perturbed recollection. Among the entangled list of new names he had gathered recently from the study of politics, Dollikins rang in his head. He shouted, 'Yes, Dollikins! to be sure. Lespel has him to lunch to-day;—calls him a gentleman-tradesman; odd fish! and told a fellow called —where is it now?—a name like brass or copper . . . Copperstone? Brasspot? . . . told him he 'd do well to keep his Tory cheek out of sight. It 's the names of those fellows bother one so! All the rest 's easy.'

'You are evidently in a state of confusion, Lord Palmet,' said Cecilia.

The tone of rebuke and admonishment was unperceived. 'Not about the facts,' he rejoined. 'I 'm for fair play all round; no trickery. I tell Beauchamp all I know, just as I told you this morning, Miss Halkett. What I don't like is Lespel turning Tory.'

Cecilia put a stop to his indiscretions by halting for Mrs. Devereux, and saying to Beauchamp, 'If your friend would return to Bevisham by rail, this is the nearest point to the station.'

Palmet, best-natured of men, though generally prompted by some of his peculiar motives, dismounted from his horse, leaving him to Beauchamp, that he might conduct Mr. Lydiard to the station, and perhaps hear a word of Miss Denham: at any rate be able to form a guess as to the secret of that art of his, which had in the space of an hour restored a happy and luminous vivacity to the languid Mrs. Wardour-Devereux.

CHAPTER XXI

THE QUESTION AS TO THE EXANIMATION OF THE WHIGS, AND THE FINE BLOW STRUCK BY MR. EVERARD ROMFREY

ITCHINCOPE was famous for its hospitality. Yet Beauchamp, when in the presence of his hostess, could see that he was both unexpected and unwelcome. Mrs. Lespel was unable to conceal it; she looked meaningly at Cecilia, talked of the house being very full, and her husband engaged till late in the afternoon. And Captain Baskelett had arrived on a sudden, she said. And the luncheon-table in the dining-room could not possibly hold more.

'We three will sit in the library, anywhere,' said Cecilia.

So they sat and lunched in the library, where Mrs. Devereux served unconsciously for an excellent ally to Cecilia in chatting to Beauchamp, principally of the writings of Mr. Lydiard.

Had the blinds of the windows been drawn down and candles lighted, Beauchamp would have been well contented to remain with these two ladies, and forget the outer world; sweeter society could not have been offered him: but glancing carelessly on to the lawn, he exclaimed in some wonderment that the man he particularly wished to see was there. 'It must be Dollikins, the brewer. I 've had him pointed out to me in Bevisham, and I never can light on him at his brewery.'

No excuse for detaining the impetuous candidate struck Cecilia. She betook herself to Mrs. Lespel, to give and receive counsel in the emergency, while Beauchamp struck

across the lawn to Mr. Dollikins, who had the squire of Itchincope on the other side of him.

Late in the afternoon a report reached the ladies of a furious contest going on over Dollikins. Mr. Algy Borolick was the first to give them intelligence of it, and he declared that Beauchamp had wrested Dollikins from Grancey Lespel. This was contradicted subsequently by Mr. Stukely Culbrett. 'But there 's heavy pulling between them,' he said.

'It will do all the good in the world to Grancey,' said Mrs. Lespel.

She sat in her little blue-room, with gentlemen congregating at the open window.

Presently Grancey Lespel rounded a projection of the house where the drawing-room stood out: 'The maddest folly ever talked!' he delivered himself in wrath. 'The Whigs dead? You may as well say I 'm dead.'

It was Beauchamp answering: 'Politically, you 're dead, if you call yourself a Whig. You couldn't be a live one, for the party 's in pieces, blown to the winds. The country was once a chess-board for Whig and Tory: but that game 's at an end. There 's no doubt on earth that the Whigs are dead.'

'But if there 's no doubt about it, how is it I have a doubt about it?'

'You know you 're a Tory. You tried to get that man Dollikins from me in the Tory interest.'

'I mean to keep him out of Radical clutches. Now that 's the truth.'

They came up to the group by the open window, still conversing hotly, indifferent to listeners.

'You won't keep him from me; I have him,' said Beauchamp.

'You delude yourself; I have his promise, his pledged word,' said Grancey Lespel.

'The man himself told you his opinion of renegade Whigs.'

'Renegade!'

'Renegade Whig is an actionable phrase,' Mr. Culbrett observed.

He was unnoticed.

'If you don't like "renegade," take "dead,"' said Beauchamp. 'Dead Whig resurgent in the Tory. You are dead.'

'It 's the stupid conceit of your party thinks that.'

'*Dead*, my dear Mr. Lespel. I 'll say for the Whigs, they would not be seen touting for Tories if they were not ghosts of Whigs. You are dead. There is no doubt of it.'

'But,' Grancey Lespel repeated, 'if there 's no doubt about it, how is it I have a doubt about it?'

'The Whigs preached finality in Reform. It was their own funeral sermon.'

'Nonsensical talk!'

'I don't dispute your liberty of action to go over to the Tories, but you have no right to attempt to take an honest Liberal with you. And that I 've stopped.'

'Aha! Beauchamp; the man 's mine. Come, you 'll own he swore he wouldn't vote for a Shrapnelite.'

'Don't you remember?—that 's how the Tories used to fight *you*; they stuck an epithet to you, and hooted to set the mob an example; you hit them off to the life,' said Beauchamp, brightening with the fine ire of strife, and affecting a sadder indignation. 'You traded on the ignorance of a man prejudiced by lying reports of one of the noblest of human creatures.'

'Shrapnel? There! I 've had enough.' Grancey Lespel bounced away with both hands outspread on the level of his ears.

'Dead!' Beauchamp sent the ghastly accusation after him.

Grancey faced round and said, 'Bo!' which was applauded for a smart retort. And let none of us be so exalted above the wit of daily life as to sneer at it. Mrs. Lespel remarked to Mr. Culbrett, 'Do you not see how much he is refreshed by the interest he takes in this election? He is ten years younger.'

Beauchamp bent to her, saying mock-dolefully, 'I 'm sorry to tell you that if ever he was a sincere Whig, he has years of remorse before him.'

'Promise me, Captain Beauchamp,' she answered, 'promise you will give us no more politics to-day.'

'If none provoke me.'

'None shall.'

'And as to Bevisham,' said Mr. Culbrett, 'it 's the identical borough for a Radical candidate, for every voter there demands a division of his property, and he should be the last to complain of an adoption of his principles.'

'Clever,' rejoined Beauchamp; 'but I am under government'; and he swept a bow to Mrs. Lespel.

As they were breaking up the group, Captain Baskelett appeared.

'Ah! Nevil,' said he, passed him, saluted Miss Halkett through the window, then cordially squeezed his cousin's hand. 'Having a holiday out of Bevisham? The baron expects to meet you at Mount Laurels to-morrow. He particularly wishes me to ask you whether you think all is fair in war.'

'I don't,' said Nevil.

'Not? The canvass goes on swimmingly.'

'Ask Palmet.'

'Palmet gives you two-thirds of the borough. The poor old Tory tortoise is nowhere. They 've been writing about you, Nevil.'

'They have. And if there 's a man of honour in the party I shall hold him responsible for it.'

'I allude to an article in the Bevisham Liberal paper; a magnificent eulogy, upon my honour. I give you my word, I have rarely read an article so eloquent. And what is the Conservative misdemeanour which the man of honour in the party is to pay for?'

'I 'll talk to you about it by-and-by,' said Nevil.

He seemed to Cecilia too trusting, too simple, considering his cousin's undisguised tone of banter. Yet she could not put him on his guard. She would have had Mr. Culbrett do so. She walked on the terrace with him near upon sunset, and said, 'The position Captain Beauchamp is in here is most unfair to him.'

'There 's nothing unfair in the lion's den,' said Stukely Culbrett; adding, 'Now, observe, Miss Halkett; he talks for effect. He discovers that Lespel is a Torified Whig; but that does not make him a bit more alert. It 's to say smart things. He speaks, but won't act, as if he were among enemies. He 's getting too fond of his bow-wow. Here he is, and he knows the den, and he chooses to act the innocent. You see how ridiculous? That trick of the ingénu, or peculiarly heavenly messenger, who pretends that he ought never to have any harm done to him, though he carries the lighted match, is the way of young Radicals. Otherwise Beauchamp would be a dear boy. We shall see how he takes his thrashing.'

'You feel sure he will be beaten?'

'He has too strong a dose of fool's honesty to succeed —stands for the game laws with Radicals, for example. He 's loaded with scruples and crotchets, and thinks more of them than of his winds and his tides. No public man is to be made out of that. His idea of the Whigs being dead shows a head that can't read the country. He means himself for mankind, and is preparing to be the benefactor of a country parish.'

'But as a naval officer?'

'Excellent.'

Cecilia was convinced that Mr. Culbrett underestimated Beauchamp. Nevertheless the confidence expressed in Beauchamp's defeat reassured and pleased her. At midnight she was dancing with him in the midst of great matronly country vessels that raised a wind when they launched on the waltz, and exacted an anxious pilotage on the part of gentlemen careful of their partners; and why I cannot say, but contrasts produce quaint ideas in excited spirits, and a dancing politician appeared to her so absurd that at one moment she had to bite her lips not to laugh. It will hardly be credited that the waltz with Nevil was delightful to Cecilia all the while, and dancing with others a penance. He danced with none other. He led her to a three o'clock morning supper: one of those triumphant subversions of the laws and customs of earth which have the charm of a form of present deification for all young people; and she, while noting how the poor man's advocate dealt with costly pasties and sparkling wines, was overjoyed at his hearty comrade's manner with the gentlemen, and a leadership in fun that he seemed to have established. Cecil Baskelett acknowledged it, and complimented him on it. 'I give you my word, Nevil, I never heard you in finer trim. Here 's to our drive into Bevisham to-morrow! Do you drink it? I beg; I entreat.'

'Oh, certainly,' said Nevil.

'Will you take a whip down there?'

'If you 're all insured.'

'On my honour, old Nevil, driving a four-in-hand is easier than governing the country.'

'I 'll accept your authority for what you know best,' said Nevil.

The toast of the Drive into Bevisham was drunk.

Cecilia left the supper-table, mortified, and feeling

disgraced by her participation in a secret that was being wantonly abused to humiliate Nevil, as she was made to think by her sensitiveness. All the gentlemen were against him, excepting perhaps that chattering pie Lord Palmet, who did him more mischief than his enemies. She could not sleep. She walked out on the terrace with Mrs. Wardour-Devereux, in a dream, hearing that lady breathe remarks hardly less than sentimental, and an unwearied succession of shouts from the smoking-room.

'They are not going to bed to-night,' said Mrs. Devereux.

'They are mystifying Captain Beauchamp,' said Cecilia.

'My husband tells me they are going to drive him into the town to-morrow.'

Cecilia flushed: she could scarcely get her breath.

'Is that their plot?' she murmured.

Sleep was rejected by her, bed itself. The drive into Bevisham had been fixed for nine A.M. She wrote two lines on note-paper in her room: but found them over-fervid and mysterious. Besides, how were they to be conveyed to Nevil's chamber!

She walked in the passage for half an hour, thinking it possible she might meet him; not the most lady-like of proceedings, but her head was bewildered. An arm-chair in her room invited her to rest and think—the mask of a natural desire for sleep. At eight in the morning she was awakened by her maid, and at a touch exclaimed, 'Have they gone?' and her heart still throbbed after hearing that most of the gentlemen were in and about the stables. Cecilia was down-stairs at a quarter to nine. The breakfast-room was empty of all but Lord Palmet and Mr. Wardour-Devereux; one selecting a cigar to light out of doors, the other debating between two pipes. She

beckoned to Palmet, and commissioned him to inform Beauchamp that she wished him to drive her down to Bevisham in her pony-carriage. Palmet brought back word from Beauchamp that he had an appointment at ten o'clock in the town. 'I want to see him,' she said; so Palmet ran out with the order. Cecilia met Beauchamp in the entrance-hall.

'You must not go,' she said bluntly.

'I can't break an appointment,' said he—'for the sake of my own pleasure,' was implied.

'Will you not listen to me, Nevil, when I say you cannot go?'

A coachman's trumpet blew.

'I shall be late. That 's Colonel Millington's team. He starts first, then Wardour-Devereux, then Cecil, and I mount beside him; Palmet 's at our heels.'

'But can't you even imagine a purpose for their driving into Bevisham so pompously?'

'Well, men with drags haven't commonly much purpose,' he said.

'But on this occasion! At an Election time! Surely, Nevil, you can guess at a reason.'

A second trumpet blew very martially. Footmen came in search of Captain Beauchamp. The alternative of breaking her pledged word to her father, or of letting Nevil be burlesqued in the sight of the town, could no longer be dallied with.

Cecilia said, 'Well, Nevil, then you shall hear it.'

Hereupon Captain Baskelett's groom informed Captain Beauchamp that he was off.

'Yes,' Nevil said to Cecilia, 'tell me on board the yacht.'

'Nevil, you will be driving into the town with the second Tory candidate of the borough.'

'Which? who?' Nevil asked.

'Your cousin Cecil.'

'Tell Captain Baskelett that I don't drive down till an hour later,' Nevil said to the groom. 'Cecilia, you 're my friend; I wish you were more. I wish we didn't differ. I shall hope to change you—make you come half-way out of that citadel of yours. This is my uncle Everard! I might have made sure there 'd be a blow from him! And Cecil! of all men for a politician! Cecilia, think of it! Cecil Baskelett! I beg Seymour Austin's pardon for having suspected him . . .'

Now sounded Captain Baskelett's trumpet.

Angry though he was, Beauchamp laughed. 'Isn't it exactly like the baron to spring a mine of this kind?'

There was decidedly humour in the plot, and it was a lusty quarterstaff blow into the bargain. Beauchamp's head rang with it. He could not conceal the stunning effect it had on him. Gratitude and tenderness toward Cecilia for saving him, at the cost of a partial breach of faith that he quite understood, from the scandal of the public entry into Bevisham on the Tory coach-box, alternated with his interjections regarding his uncle Everard.

At eleven, Cecilia sat in her pony-carriage giving final directions to Mrs. Devereux where to look out for the Esperanza and the schooner's boat. 'Then I drive down alone,' Mrs. Devereux said.

The gentlemen were all off, and every available maid with them on the coach-boxes, a brilliant sight that had been missed by Nevil and Cecilia.

'Why, here 's Lydiard!' said Nevil, supposing that Lydiard must be approaching him with tidings of the second Tory candidate. But Lydiard knew nothing of it. He was the bearer of a letter on foreign paper—marked urgent, in Rosamund's hand—and similarly worded in

the well-known hand which had inscribed the original address of the letter to Steynham.

Beauchamp opened it and read—

'*Château Tourdestelle*
'(*Eure*).

'*Come. I give you three days—no more.*

'RENÉE.'

The brevity was horrible. Did it spring from childish imperiousness or tragic peril?

Beauchamp could imagine it to be this or that. In moments of excited speculation we do not dwell on the possibility that there may be a mixture of motives.

'I fear I must cross over to France this evening,' he said to Cecilia.

She replied, 'It is likely to be stormy to-night. The steamboat may not run.'

'If there 's a doubt of it, I shall find a French lugger. You are tired, from not sleeping last night.'

'No,' she answered, and nodded to Mrs. Devereux, beside whom Mr. Lydiard stood: 'You will not drive down alone, you see.'

For a young lady threatened with a tempest in her heart, as disturbing to her as the one gathering in the West for ships at sea, Miss Halkett bore herself well.

CHAPTER XXII

THE DRIVE INTO BEVISHAM

BEAUCHAMP was requested by Cecilia to hold the reins. His fair companion in the pony-carriage preferred to lean back musing, and he had leisure to think over the blow

dealt him by his uncle Everard with so sure an aim so ringingly on the head. And in the first place he made no attempt to disdain it because it was nothing but artful and heavy-handed, after the mediæval pattern. Of old he himself had delighted in artfulness as well as boldness and the unmistakeable hit. Highly to prize generalship was in his blood, though latterly the very forces propelling him to his political warfare had forbidden the use of it to him. He saw the patient veteran laying his gun for a long shot—to give as good as he had received; and in realizing Everard Romfrey's perfectly placid bearing under provocation, such as he certainly would have maintained while preparing his reply to it, the raw fighting humour of the plot touched the sense of justice in Beauchamp enough to make him own that he had been the first to offend.

He could reflect also on the likelihood that other offended men of his uncle's age and position would have sulked or stormed, threatening the Parthian shot of the vindictive testator. If there was godlessness in turning to politics for a weapon to strike a domestic blow, manfulness in some degree signalized it. Beauchamp could fancy his uncle crying out, Who set the example? and he was not at that instant inclined to dwell on the occult virtues of the example he had set. To be honest, this elevation of a political puppet like Cecil Baskelett, and the starting him, out of the same family which Turbot, the journalist, had magnified, into Bevisham with such pomp and flourish in opposition to the serious young champion of popular rights and the Puritan style, was ludicrously effective. Conscienceless of course. But that was the way of the Old School.

Beauchamp broke the silence by thanking Cecilia once more for saving him from the absurd exhibition of the Radical candidate on the Tory coach-box, and laughing

at the grimmish slyness of his uncle Everard's conspiracy: a something in it that was half-smile half-sneer; not exactly malignant, and by no means innocent; something made up of the simplicity of a lighted match, and its proximity to powder, yet neither deadly, in spite of a wicked twinkle, nor at all pretending to be harmless: in short, a specimen of old English practical humour.

He laboured to express these or corresponding views of it, with tolerably natural laughter, and Cecilia rallied her spirits at his pleasant manner of taking his blow.

'I shall compliment the baron when I meet him to-night,' he said. 'What can we compare him to?'

She suggested the Commander of the Faithful, the Lord Haroun, who likewise had a turn for buffooneries to serve a purpose, and could direct them loftily and sovereignly.

'No: Everard Romfrey's a Northerner from the feet up,' said Beauchamp.

Cecilia compliantly offered him a sketch of the Scandinavian Troll: much nearer the mark, he thought, and exclaimed: 'Baron Troll! I'm afraid, Cecilia, you have robbed him of the best part of his fun. And you will owe it entirely to him if you should be represented in Parliament by my cousin Baskelett.'

'Promise me, Nevil, that you will, when you meet Captain Baskelett, not forget I did you some service, and that I wish, I shall be so glad if you do not resent certain things. . . . Very objectionable, we all think.'

He released her from the embarrassing petition: 'Oh! now I know my man, you may be sure I won't waste a word on him. The fact is, he would not understand a word, and would require more—and that I don't do. When I fancied Mr. Austin was the responsible person, I meant to speak to him.'

Cecilia smiled gratefully.

The sweetness of a love-speech would not have been sweeter to her than this proof of civilized chivalry in Nevil.

They came to the fir-heights overlooking Bevisham. Here the breezy beginning of a South-western autumnal gale tossed the ponies' manes and made threads of Cecilia's shorter locks of beautiful auburn by the temples and the neck, blustering the curls that streamed in a thick involution from the silken band gathering them off her uncovered clear-swept ears.

Beauchamp took an impression of her side face. It seemed to offer him everything the world could offer of cultivated purity, intelligent beauty and attractiveness; and 'Wilt thou?' said the winged minute. Peace, a good repute in the mouths of men, home, and a trustworthy woman for mate, an ideal English lady, the rarest growth of our country, and friends and fair esteem, were offered. Last night he had waltzed with her, and the manner of this tall graceful girl in submitting to the union of the measure and reserving her individual distinction, had exquisitely flattered his taste, giving him an auspicious image of her in partnership, through the uses of life.

He looked ahead at the low dead-blue cloud swinging from across channel. What could be the riddle of Renée's letter! It chained him completely.

'At all events, I shall not be away longer than three days,' he said; paused, eyed Cecilia's profile, and added, 'Do we differ so much?'

'It may not be so much as we think,' said she.

'But if we do!'

'Then, Nevil, there is a difference between us.'

'But if we keep our lips closed?'

'We should have to shut our eyes as well!'

A lovely melting image of her stole over him; all the

warmer for her unwittingness in producing it: and it awakened a tenderness toward the simple speaker.

Cecilia's delicate breeding saved her from running on figuratively. She continued: 'Intellectual differences do not cause wounds, except when very unintellectual sentiments are behind them:—my conceit, or your impatience, Nevil? "*Noi veggiam come quei, che ha mala luce.*" . . . I can confess my sight to be imperfect: but will you ever do so?'

Her musical voice in Italian charmed his hearing.

'What poet was that you quoted?'

'The wisest: Dante.'

'Dr. Shrapnel's favourite! I must try to read him.'

'He reads Dante?' Cecilia threw a stress on the august name; and it was manifest that she cared not for the answer.

Contemptuous exclusiveness could not go farther.

'He is a man of cultivation,' Beauchamp said cursorily, trying to avoid dissension, but in vain. 'I wish I were half as well instructed, and the world half as charitable as he!—You ask me if I shall admit my sight to be imperfect. Yes; when you prove to me that priests and landlords are willing to do their duty by the people in preference to their churches and their property: but will you ever shake off prejudice?'

Here was opposition sounding again. Cecilia mentally reproached Dr. Shrapnel for it.

'Indeed, Nevil, really, must not—may I not ask you this?—must not every one feel the evil spell of some associations? And Dante and Dr. Shrapnel!'

'You don't know him, Cecilia.'

'I saw him yesterday.'

'You thought him too tall?'

'I thought of his character.'

'How angry I should be with you if you were not so beautiful!'

'I am immensely indebted to my unconscious advocate.'

'You are clad in steel; you flash back; you won't answer me out of the heart. I 'm convinced it is pure wilfulness that makes you oppose me.'

'I fancy you must be convinced because you cannot imagine women to have any share of public spirit, Nevil.'

A grain of truth in that remark set Nevil reflecting.

'I want them to have it,' he remarked, and glanced at a Tory placard, probably the puppet's fresh-printed address to the electors, on one of the wayside fir-trees. 'Bevisham looks well from here. We might make a North-western Venice of it, if we liked.'

'Papa told you it would be money sunk in mud.'

'Did I mention it to him?—Thoroughly Conservative! —So he would leave the mud as it is. They insist on our not venturing anything—those Tories! exactly as though we had gained the best of human conditions, instead of counting crops of rogues, malefactors, egoists, noxious and lumbersome creatures that deaden the country. Your town down there is one of the ugliest and dirtiest in the kingdom: it might be the fairest.'

'I have often thought that of Bevisham, Nevil.'

He drew a visionary sketch of quays, embankments, bridged islands, public buildings, magical emanations of patriotic architecture, with a practical air, an absence of that enthusiasm which struck her with suspicion when it was not applied to landscape or the Arts; and she accepted it, and warmed, and even allowed herself to appear hesitating when he returned to the similarity of the state of mud-begirt Bevisham and our great sluggish England.

Was he not perhaps to be pitied in his bondage to the Frenchwoman, who could have no ideas in common with him?

The rare circumstance that she and Nevil Beauchamp

had found a subject of agreement, partially overcame the sentiment Cecilia entertained for the foreign lady; and having now one idea in common with him, she conceived the possibility that there might be more. There must be many, for he loved England, and she no less. She clung, however, to the topic of Bevisham, preferring to dream of the many more, rather than run risks. Undoubtedly the town was of an ignoble aspect; and it was declining in prosperity; and it was consequently over-populated. And undoubtedly (so she was induced to coincide for the moment) a Government, acting to any extent like a supervising head, should aid and direct the energies of towns and ports and trades, and not leave everything everywhere to chance: schools for the people, public morality, should be the charge of Government. Cecilia had surrendered the lead to him, and was forced to subscribe to an equivalent of 'undoubtedly' the Tories just as little as the Liberals had done these good offices. Party against party, neither of them had a forethoughtful head for the land at large. They waited for the Press to spur a great imperial country to be but defensively armed, and they accepted the so-called volunteers, with a nominal one-month's drill per annum, as a guarantee of defence!

Beauchamp startled her, actually kindled her mind to an activity of wonder and regret, with the statement of how much Government, acting with some degree of farsightedness, *might* have won to pay the public debt and remit taxation, by originally retaining the lines of railway, and fastening on the valuable land adjoining stations. Hundreds of millions of pounds!

She dropped a sigh at the prodigious amount, but inquired, 'Who has calculated it?'

For though perfectly aware that this kind of conversation was a special compliment paid to her by her friend Nevil, and dimly perceiving that it implied something

beyond a compliment—in fact, that it was his manner of probing her for sympathy, as other men would have conducted the process preliminary to deadly flattery or to wooing, her wits fenced her heart about; the exercise of shrewdness was an instinct of self-preservation. She had nothing but her poor wits, daily growing fainter, to resist him with. And he seemed to know it, and therefore assailed them, never trying at the heart.

That vast army of figures might be but a phantom army conjured out of the Radical mists, might it not? she hinted. And besides, we cannot surely require a Government to speculate in the future, can we?

Possibly not, as Governments go, Beauchamp said.

But what think you of a Government of landowners decreeing the enclosure of millions of acres of common land amongst themselves; taking the property of the people to add to their own! Say, is not that plunder? Public property, observe; decreed to them by their own law-making, under the pretence that it was being reclaimed for cultivation, when in reality it has been but an addition to their pleasure-grounds: a flat robbery of pasture from the poor man's cow and goose, and his right of cutting furze for firing. Consider that! Beauchamp's eyes flashed democratic in reciting this injury to the objects of his warm solicitude—the man, the cow, and the goose. But so must he have looked when fronting England's enemies, and his aspect of fervour subdued Cecilia. She confessed her inability to form an estimate of such conduct.

'Are they doing it still?' she asked.

'We owe it to Dr. Shrapnel foremost that there is now a watch over them to stop them. But for him, Grancey Lespel would have enclosed half of Northeden Heath. As it is, he has filched bits here and there, and he will have to put back his palings.'

However, now let Cecilia understand that we English,

calling ourselves free, are under morally lawless rule. *Government* is what we require, and our means of getting it must be through universal suffrage. At present we have no Government; only shifting Party Ministries, which are the tools of divers interests, wealthy factions, to the sacrifice of the Commonwealth.

She listened, like Rosamund Culling overborne by Dr. Shrapnel, inwardly praying that she might discover a man to reply to him.

'A Despotism, Nevil?'

He hoped not, declined the despot, was English enough to stand against the best of men in that character; but he cast it on Tory, Whig, and Liberal, otherwise the Constitutionalists, if we were to come upon the despot.

'They see we are close on universal suffrage; they 've been bidding each in turn for "the people," and that has brought them to it, and now they 're alarmed, and accuse one another of treason to the Constitution, and they don't accept the situation: and there 's a fear, that to carry on their present system, they will be thwarting the people or corrupting them: and in that case we shall have our despot in some shape or other, and we shall suffer.'

'Nevil,' said Cecilia, 'I am out of my depth.'

'I 'll support you; I can swim for two,' said he.

'You are very self-confident, but I find I am not fit for battle; at least not in the front ranks.'

'Nerve me, then: will you? Try to comprehend once for all what the battle is.'

'I am afraid I am too indifferent; I am too luxurious. That reminds me: you want to meet your uncle Everard: and if you will sleep at Mount Laurels to-night, the Esperanza shall take you to France to-morrow morning, and can wait to bring you back.'

As she spoke she perceived a flush mounting over Nevil's face. Soon it was communicated to hers.

The strange secret of the blood electrified them both, and revealed the burning undercurrent running between them from the hearts of each. The light that showed how near they were to one another was kindled at the barrier dividing them. It remained as good as a secret, unchallenged until they had separated, and after midnight Cecilia looked through her chamber windows at the driving moon of a hurricane scud, and read clearly his honourable reluctance to be wafted over to his French love by her assistance; and Beauchamp on board the tossing steamboat perceived in her sympathetic reddening that she had divined him.

This auroral light eclipsed the other events of the day. He drove into a town royally decorated, and still humming with the ravishment of the Tory entrance. He sailed in the schooner to Mount Laurels, in the society of Captain Baskelett and his friends, who, finding him tamer than they expected, bantered him in the cheerfullest fashion. He waited for his uncle Everard several hours at Mount Laurels, perused the junior Tory's address to the Electors, throughout which there was not an idea—safest of addresses to canvass upon! perused likewise, at Captain Baskelett's request, a broad sheet of an article introducing the new candidate to Bevisham with the battle-axe Romfreys to back him, in high burlesque of Timothy Turbot upon Beauchamp: and Cecil hoped his cousin would not object to his borrowing a Romfrey or two for so pressing an occasion. All very funny, and no doubt the presence of Mr. Everard Romfrey would have heightened the fun from the fountain-head; but he happened to be delayed, and Beauchamp had to leave directions behind him in the town, besides the discussion of a whole plan of conduct with Dr. Shrapnel, so he was under the necessity of departing without seeing his uncle, really to his regret. He left word to that effect.

Taking leave of Cecilia, he talked of his return 'home' within three or four days as a certainty.

She said: 'Canvassing should not be neglected now.'

Her hostility was confused by what she had done to save him from annoyance, while his behaviour to his cousin Cecil increased her respect for him. She detected a pathetic meaning in his mention of the word home; she mused on his having called her beautiful: whither was she hurrying? Forgetful of her horror of his revolutionary ideas, forgetful of the elevation of her own, she thrilled secretly on hearing it stated by the jubilant young Tories at Mount Laurels, as a characteristic of Beauchamp, that he was clever in parrying political thrusts, and slipping from the theme; he who with her gave out unguardedly the thoughts deepest in him. And the thoughts!—were they not of generous origin? Where so true a helpmate for him as the one to whom his mind appealed? It could not be so with the Frenchwoman. Cecilia divined a generous nature by generosity, and set herself to believe that in honour he had not yet dared to speak to her from the heart, not being at heart quite free. She was at the same time in her remains of pride cool enough to examine and rebuke the weakness she succumbed to in now clinging to him by that which yesterday she hardly less than loathed, still deeply disliked.

CHAPTER XXIII

TOURDESTELLE

On the part of Beauchamp, his conversation with Cecilia during the drive into Bevisham opened out for the first time in his life a prospect of home; he had felt the word

in speaking it, and it signified an end to the distractions produced by the sex, allegiance to one beloved respected woman, and also a basis of operations against the world. For she was evidently conquerable, and once matched with him would be the very woman to nerve and sustain him. Did she not listen to him? He liked her resistance. That element of the barbarous which went largely to form his emotional nature was overjoyed in wresting such a woman from the enemy, and subduing her personally. She was a prize. She was a splendid prize, cut out from under the guns of the fort. He rendered all that was due to his eminently good cause for its part in so signal a success, but individual satisfaction is not diminished by the thought that the individual's discernment selected the cause thus beneficent to him.

Beauchamp's meditations were diverted by the sight of the coast of France dashed in rain-lines across a weed-strewn sea. The 'three days' granted him by Renée were over, and it scarcely troubled him that he should be behind the time; he detested mystery, holding it to be a sign of pretentious feebleness, often of imposture, it might be frivolity. Punctilious obedience to the mysterious brevity of the summons, and not to chafe at it, appeared to him as much as could be expected of a struggling man. This was the state of the case with him, until he stood on French earth, breathed French air, and chanced to hear the tongue of France twittered by a lady on the quay. The charm was instantaneous. He reminded himself that Renée, unlike her countrywomen, had no gift for writing letters. They had never corresponded since the hour of her marriage. They had met in Sicily, at Syracuse, in the presence of her father and her husband, and so inanimate was she that the meeting seemed like the conclusion of their history. Her brother Roland sent tidings of her by fits, and sometimes a

conventional message from Tourdestelle. Latterly her husband's name had been cited as among the wildfires of Parisian quags, in journals more or less devoted to those unreclaimed spaces of the city. Well, if she was unhappy, was it not the fulfilment of his prophecy in Venice?

Renée's brevity became luminous. She needed him urgently, and knowing him faithful to the death, she, because she knew him, dispatched purely the words which said she needed him. Why, those brief words were the poetry of noble confidence! But what could her distress be? The lover was able to read that, 'Come; I give you three days,' addressed to him, was not language of a woman free of her yoke.

Excited to guess and guess, Beauchamp swept on to speculations of a madness that seized him bodily at last. Were you loved, Cecilia? He thought little of politics in relation to Renée; or of home, or of honour in the world's eye, or of labouring to pay the fee for his share of life. This at least was one of the forms of love which precipitate men: the sole thought in him was to be with her. She was Renée, the girl of whom he had prophetically said that she must come to regrets and tears. His vision of her was not at Tourdestelle, though he assumed her to be there awaiting him: she was under the sea-shadowing Alps, looking up to the red and gold-rosed heights of a realm of morning that was hers inviolably, and under which Renée was eternally his.

The interval between then and now was but the space of an unquiet sea traversed in the night, sad in the passage of it, but featureless—and it had proved him right! It was to Nevil Beauchamp as if the spirit of his old passion woke up again to glorious hopeful morning when he stood in Renée's France.

Tourdestelle enjoyed the aristocratic privilege of being

twelve miles from the nearest railway station. Alighting here on an evening of clear sky, Beauchamp found an English groom ready to dismount for him and bring on his portmanteau. The man said that his mistress had been twice to the station, and was now at the neighbouring Château Dianet. Thither Beauchamp betook himself on horseback. He was informed at the gates that Madame la Marquise had left for Tourdestelle in the saddle only ten minutes previously. The lodge-keeper had been instructed to invite him to stay at Château Dianet in the event of his arriving late, but it would be possible to overtake madame by a cut across the heights at a turn of the valley. Beauchamp pushed along the valley for this visible projection; a towering mass of woodland, in the midst of which a narrow roadway, worn like the track of a torrent with heavy rain, wound upward. On his descent to the farther side, he was to spy directly below in the flat for Tourdestelle. He crossed the wooded neck above the valley, and began descending, peering into gulfs of the twilight dusk. Some paces down he was aided by a brilliant half-moon that divided the whole underlying country into sharp outlines of dark and fair, and while endeavouring to distinguish the château of Tourdestelle his eyes were attracted to an angle of the downward zigzag, where a pair of horses emerged into broad light swiftly; apparently the riders were disputing, or one had overtaken the other in pursuit. Riding-habit and plumed hat signalized the sex of one. Beauchamp sung out a gondolier's cry. He fancied it was answered. He was heard, for the lady turned about, and as he rode down, still uncertain of her, she came cantering up alone, and there could be no uncertainty.

Moonlight is friendless to eyes that would make sure of a face long unseen. It was Renée whose hand he clasped, but the story of the years on her, and whether she was

in bloom, or wan as the beams revealing her, he could not see.

Her tongue sounded to him as if it were loosened without a voice. 'You have come. That storm! You are safe!'

So phantom-like a sound of speech alarmed him. 'I lost no time. But you?'

'I am well.'

'Nothing hangs over you?'

'Nothing.'

'Why give me just three days?'

'Pure impatience. Have you forgotten me?'

Their horses walked on with them. They unlocked their hands.

'You knew it was I?' said he.

'Who else could it be? I heard Venice,' she replied.

Her previous cavalier was on his feet, all but on his knees, it appeared, searching for something that eluded him under the road-side bank. He sprang at it and waved it, leapt in the saddle, and remarked, as he drew up beside Renée: 'What one picks from the earth one may wear, I presume, especially when we can protest it is our property.'

Beauchamp saw him planting a white substance most carefully at the breast buttonhole of his coat. It could hardly be a flower. Some drooping exotic of the conservatory perhaps resembled it.

Renée pronounced his name: 'M. le Comte Henri d'Henriel.'

He bowed to Beauchamp with an extreme sweep of the hat.

'Last night, M. Beauchamp, we put up vows for you to the Marine God, beseeching an exemption from that horrible mal de mer. Thanks to the storm, I suppose, I have won. I must maintain, madame, that I won.'

'You wear your trophy,' said Renée, and her horse reared and darted ahead.

The gentleman on each side of her struck into a trot. Beauchamp glanced at M. d'Henriel's breast-decoration. Renée pressed the pace, and threading dense covers of foliage they reached the level of the valley, where for a couple of miles she led them, stretching away merrily, now in shadow, now in moonlight, between high land and meadow land, and a line of poplars in the meadows winding with the river that fed the vale and shot forth gleams of silvery disquiet by rustic bridge and mill.

The strangeness of being beside her, not having yet scanned her face, marvelling at her voice—that was like and unlike the Renée of old, full of her, but in another key, a mellow note, maturer—made the ride magical to Beauchamp, planting the past in the present like a perceptible ghost.

Renée slackened speed, saying: 'Tourdestelle spans a branch of our little river. This is our gate. Had it been daylight I would have taken you by another way, and you would have seen the black tower burnt in the Revolution; an imposing monument, I am assured. However, you will think it pretty beside the stream. Do you come with us, M. le Comte?'

His answer was inaudible to Beauchamp; he did not quit them.

The lamp at the lodge-gates presented the young man's face in full view, and Beauchamp thought him supremely handsome. He perceived it to be a lady's glove that M. d'Henriel wore at his breast.

Renée walked her horse up the park-drive, alongside the bright running water. It seemed that she was aware of the method of provoking or reproving M. d'Henriel. He endured some minutes of total speechlessness at this pace, and abruptly said adieu and turned back.

Renée bounded like a vessel free of her load. 'But why should we hurry?' said she, and checked her course to the walk again. 'I hope you like our Normandy, and my valley. You used to love France, Nevil; and Normandy, they tell me, is cousin to the opposite coast of England, in climate, soil, people, it may be in manners too. A Beauchamp never can feel that he is a foreigner in Normandy. We claim you half French. You have grander parks, they say. We can give you sunlight.'

'And it was really only the wish to see me?' said Beauchamp.

'Only, and really. One does not live for ever—on earth; and it becomes a question whether friends should be shadows to one another before death. I wrote to you because I wished to see you: I was impatient because I am Renée.'

'You relieve me!'

'Evidently you have forgotten my character, Nevil.'

'Not a feature of it.'

'Ah!' she breathed involuntarily.

'Would you have me forget it?'

'When I think by myself, quite alone, yes, I would. Otherwise how can one hope that one's friend is friendship, supposing him to read us as we are—minutely, accurately? And it is in absence that we desire our friends to be friendship itself. And . . . and I am utterly astray! I have not dealt in this language since I last thought of writing a diary, and stared at the first line. If I mistake not, you are fond of the picturesque. If moonlight and water will satisfy you, look yonder.'

The moon launched her fairy silver fleets on a double sweep of the little river round an island of reeds and two tall poplars.

'I have wondered whether I should ever see you looking at that scene,' said Renée.

He looked from it to her, and asked if Roland was well, and her father; then alluded to her husband; but the unlettering elusive moon, bright only in the extension of her beams, would not tell him what story this face, once heaven to him, wore imprinted on it. Her smile upon a parted mouth struck him as two-edged in replying: 'I have good news to give you of them all: Roland is in garrison at Rouen, and will come when I telegraph. My father is in Touraine, and greets you affectionately; he hopes to come. They are both perfectly happy. My husband is travelling.'

Beauchamp was conscious of some bitter taste; unaware of what it was, though it led him to say, undesignedly: 'How very handsome that M. d'Henriel is!—if I have his name correctly.'

Renée answered: 'He has the misfortune to be considered the handsomest young man in France.'

'He has an Italian look.'

'His mother was Provençale.'

She put her horse in motion, saying: 'I agree with you that handsome men are rarities. And, by the way, they do not set *our* world on fire quite as much as beautiful women do yours, my friend. Acknowledge so much in our favour.'

He assented indefinitely. He could have wished himself away canvassing in Bevisham. He had only to imagine himself away from her, to feel the flood of joy in being with her.

'Your husband is travelling?'

'It is his pleasure.'

Could she have intended to say that this was good news to give of him as well as of the happiness of her father and brother?

'Now look on Tourdestelle,' said Renée. 'You will avow that for an active man to be condemned to seek

repose in so dull a place, after the fatigues of the season in Paris, it is considerably worse than for women, so I am here to dispense the hospitalities. The right wing of the château, on your left, is new. The side abutting the river is inhabited by Dame Philiberte, whom her husband imprisoned for attempting to take her pleasure in travel. I hear upon authority that she dresses in white, and wears a black crucifix. She is many centuries old, and still she lives to remind people that she married a Rouaillout. Do you not think she should have come to me to welcome me? She never has; and possibly of ladies who are disembodied we may say that they know best. For me, I desire the interview—and I am a coward: I need not state it.' She ceased; presently continuing: 'The other inhabitants are my sister, Agnès d'Auffray, wife of a general officer serving in Africa—my sister by marriage, and my friend; the baronne d'Orbec, a relation by marriage; M. d'Orbec, her son, a guest, and a sportsman; M. Livret, an erudite. No young ladies: I can bear much, but not their presence; girls are odious to me. I knew one in Venice.'

They came within the rays of the lamp hanging above the unpretending entrance to the château. Renée's broad grey Longueville hat curved low with its black plume on the side farthest from him. He was favoured by the gallant lift of the brim on the near side, but she had overshadowed her eyes.

'He wears a glove at his breast,' said Beauchamp.

'You speak of M. d'Henriel. He wears a glove at his breast; yes, it is mine,' said Renée.

She slipped from her horse and stood against his shoulder, as if waiting to be questioned before she rang the bell of the château.

Beauchamp alighted, burning with his unutterable questions concerning that glove.

'Lift your hat, let me beg you; let me see you,' he said.

This was not what she had expected. With one heave of her bosom, and murmuring: 'I made a vow I would obey you absolutely if you came,' she raised the hat above her brows, and lightning would not have surprised him more; for there had not been a single vibration of her voice to tell him of tears running: nay, the absence of the usual French formalities in her manner of addressing him, had seemed to him to indicate her intention to put him at once on an easy friendly footing, such as would be natural to her, and not painful to him. Now she said: 'You perceive, monsieur, that I have my sentimental fits like others; but in truth I am not insensible to the picturesque or to gratitude, and I thank you sincerely for coming, considering that I wrote like a Sphinx—to evade writing *comme une folle*!'

She swept to the bell.

Standing in the arch of the entrance, she stretched her whip out to a black mass of prostrate timber, saying: 'It fell in the storm at two o'clock after midnight, and you on the sea!'

CHAPTER XXIV

HIS HOLIDAY

A SINGLE day was to be the term of his holiday at Tourdestelle; but it stood forth as one of those perfect days which are rounded by an evening before and a morning after, giving him two nights under the same roof with Renée, something of a resemblance to three days of her; anticipation and wonder filling the first, she the next, the adieu the last: every hour filled. And the first day was

not over yet. He forced himself to calmness, that he might not fritter it, and walked up and down the room he was dressing in, examining its foreign decorations, and peering through the window, to quiet his nerves. He was in her own France with her! The country borrowed hues from Renée, and lent some. This chivalrous France framed and interlaced her image, aided in idealizing her, and was in turn transfigured. Not half so well would his native land have pleaded for the forgiveness of a British damsel who had wrecked a young man's immoderate first love. That glorified self-love requires the touch upon imagination of strangeness and an unaccustomed grace, to subdue it and make it pardon an outrage to its temples and altars, and its happy reading of the heavens, the earth too: earth foremost, we ought perhaps to say. It is an exacting heathen, best understood by a glance at what will appease it: beautiful, however, as everybody has proved; and shall it be decried in a world where beauty is not overcommon, though it would slaughter us for its angry satisfaction, yet can be soothed by a tone of colour, as it were by a novel inscription on a sweetmeat?

The peculiarity of Beauchamp was that he knew the slenderness of the thread which was leading him, and foresaw it twisting to a coil unless he should hold firm. His work in life was much above the love of a woman in his estimation, so he was not deluded by passion when he entered the château; it is doubtful whether he would not hesitatingly have sacrificed one of the precious votes in Bevisham for the pleasure of kissing her hand when they were on the steps. She was his first love and only love, married, and long ago forgiven:—married; that is to say, she especially among women was interdicted to him by the lingering shadow of the reverential love gone by; and if the anguish of the lover's worse than death survived in a shudder of memory at the thought of her not solely

lost to him but possessed by another, it did but quicken a hunger that was three parts curiosity to see how she who had suffered this bore the change; how like or unlike she might be to the extinct Renée; what traces she kept of the face he had known. Her tears were startling, but tears tell of a mood, they do not tell the story of the years; and it was that story he had such eagerness to read in one brief revelation: an eagerness born only of the last few hours, and broken by fears of a tarnished aspect; these again being partly hopes of a coming disillusion that would restore him his independence and ask him only for pity. The slavery of the love of a woman chained like Renée was the most revolting of prospects to a man who cherished his freedom that he might work to the end of his time. Moreover, it swung a thunder-cloud across his holiday. He recurred to the idea of the holiday repeatedly, and the more he did so the thinner it waned. He was exhausting the very air and spirit of it with a mind that ran incessantly forward and back; and when he and the lady of so much speculation were again together, an incapacity of observation seemed to have come over him. In reality it was the inability to reflect on his observations. Her presence resembled those dark sunsets throwing the spell of colour across the world; when there is no question with us of morning or of night, but of that sole splendour only.

Owing to their arrival late at the château, covers were laid for them in the boudoir of Madame la Marquise, where he had his hostess to himself, and certainly the opportunity of studying her. An English Navy List solitary on a shelf, and laid within it an extract of a paper announcing the return of the Ariadne to port, explained the mystery of her knowing that he was in England, as well as the correctness of the superscription of her letter to him. 'You see, I follow you,' she said.

Beauchamp asked if she read English now.

'A little; but the paper was dispatched to me by M. Vivian Ducie, of your embassy in Paris. He is in the valley.'

The name of Ducie recalled Lord Palmet's description of the dark beauty of the fluttering pale gold ornaments. She was now dressed without one decoration of gold or jewel, with scarcely a wave in the silk, a modesty of style eloquent of the pride of her form.

Could those eyes fronting him under the lamp have recently shed tears? They were the living eyes of a brilliant unembarrassed lady; shields flinging light rather than well-depths inviting it.

Beauchamp tried to compare her with the Renée of Venice, and found himself thinking of the glove she had surrendered to the handsomest young man in France. The effort to recover the younger face gave him a dead creature, with the eyelashes of Renée, the cast of her mouth and throat, misty as a shape in a dream.

He could compare her with Cecilia, who never would have risked a glove, never have betrayed a tear, and was the statelier lady, not without language: but how much less vivid in feature and the gift of speech! Renée's gift of speech counted unnumbered strings which she played on with a grace that clothed the skill, and was her natural endowment—an art perfected by the education of the world. Who cannot talk!—but who can? Discover the writers in a day when all are writing! It is as rare an art as poetry, and in the mouths of women as enrapturing, richer than their voices in music.

This was the fascination Beauchamp felt weaving round him. Would you, that are separable from boys and mobs, and the object malignly called the Briton, prefer the celestial singing of a woman to her excellently talking? But not if it were given you to run in unison with

her genius of the tongue, following her verbal ingenuities and feminine silk-flashes of meaning; not if she led you to match her fine quick perceptions with more or less of the discreet concordance of the violoncello accompanying the viol. It is not high flying, which usually ends in heavy falling. You quit the level of earth no more than two birds that chase from bush to bush to bill in air, for mutual delight to make the concert heavenly. Language flowed from Renée in affinity with the pleasure-giving laws that make the curves we recognize as beauty in sublimer arts. Accept companionship for the dearest of the good things we pray to have, and what equalled her! Who could be her rival!

Her girl's crown of irradiated Alps began to tremble over her dimly, as from moment to moment their intimacy warmed, and Beauchamp saw the young face vanishing out of this flower of womanhood. He did not see it appearing or present, but vanishing like the faint ray in the rosier. Nay, the blot of her faithlessness underwent a transformation: it affected him somewhat as the patch cunningly laid on near a liquid dimple in fair cheeks at once allures and evades a susceptible attention.

Unused in his French of late, he stumbled at times, and she supplied the needed phrase, taking no note of a blunder. Now men of sweet blood cannot be secretly accusing or criticizing a gracious lady. Domestic men are charged with thinking instantly of dark death when an ordinary illness befalls them; and it may be so or not: but it is positive that the gallant man of the world, if he is in the sensitive condition, and not yet established as the lord of her, feels paralyzed in his masculine sense of leadership the moment his lady assumes the initiative and directs him: he gives up at once; and thus have many nimble-witted dames from one clear start retained their advantage.

Concerning that glove: well! the handsomest young man in France wore the glove of the loveliest woman. The loveliest? The very loveliest in the purity of her French style—the woman to challenge England for a type of beauty to eclipse her. It was possible to conceive her country wagering her against all women.

If Renée had faults, Beauchamp thought of her as at sea breasting tempests, while Cecilia was a vessel lying safe in harbour, untried, however promising: and if Cecilia raised a steady light for him, it was over the shores he had left behind, while Renée had really nothing to do with warning or rescuing, or with imperilling; she welcomed him simply to a holiday in her society. He associated Cecilia strangely with the political labours she would have had him relinquish; and Renée with a pleasant state of indolence, that her lightest smile disturbed. Shun comparisons.

It is the tricksy heart which sets up that balance, to jump into it on one side or the other. Comparisons come of a secret leaning that is sure to play rogue under its mien of honest dealer: so Beauchamp suffered himself to be unjust to graver England, and lost the strength she would have given him to resist a bewitchment. The case with him was, that his apprenticeship was new; he had been trotting in harness as a veritable cab-horse of politics—he by blood a racer; and his nature craved for diversions, against his will, against his moral sense and born tenacity of spirit.

Not a word further of the glove. But at night, in his bed, the glove was a principal actor in events of extraordinary magnitude and inconsequence.

He was out in the grounds with the early morning light. Coffee and sweet French bread were brought out to him, and he was informed of the hours of reunion at the château, whose mistress continued invisible. She might

be sleeping. He strolled about, within view of the windows, wondering at her subservience to sleep. Tourdestelle lay in one of those Norman valleys where the river is the mother of rich pasture, and runs hidden between double ranks of sallows, aspens and poplars, that mark its winding line in the arms of trenched meadows. The high land on either side is an unwatered flat up to the horizon, little varied by dusty apple-trees planted in the stubble here and there, and brown mud walls of hamlets; a church-top, a copse, an avenue of dwarf limes leading to the three-parts farm, quarter residence of an enriched peasant striking new roots, or decayed proprietor pinching not to be severed from ancient. Descending on the deep green valley in Summer is like a change of climes. The château stood square at a branch of the river, tossing three light bridges of pretty woodwork to park and garden. Great bouquets of swelling blue and pink hydrangia nestled at his feet on shaven grass. An open window showed a cloth of colour, as in a reminiscence of Italy.

Beauchamp heard himself addressed:—'You are looking for my sister-in-law, M. Beauchamp?'

The speaker was Madame d'Auffray, to whom he had been introduced overnight—a lady of the aquiline French outline, not ungentle.

Renée had spoken affectionately of her, he remembered. There was nothing to make him be on his guard, and he stated that he was looking for Madame de Rouaillout, and did not conceal surprise at the information that she was out on horseback.

'She is a tireless person,' Madame d'Auffray remarked. 'You will not miss her long. We all meet at twelve, as you know.'

'I grudge an hour, for I go to-morrow,' said Beauchamp.

The notification of so early a departure, or else his bluntness, astonished her. She fell to praising Renée's goodness. He kept her to it with lively interrogations, in the manner of a guileless boy urging for eulogies of his dear absent friend. Was it duplicity in him or artlessness?

'Has she, do you think, increased in beauty?' Madame d'Auffray inquired: an insidious question, to which he replied:

'Once I thought it would be impossible.'

Not so bad an answer for an Englishman, in a country where speaking is fencing; the race being little famous for dialectical alertness: but was it artful or simple?

They skirted the château, and Beauchamp had the history of Dame Philiberte recounted to him, with a mixture of Gallic irony, innuendo, openness, touchingness, ridicule, and charity novel to his ears. Madame d'Auffray struck the note of intimacy earlier than is habitual. She sounded him in this way once or twice, carelessly perusing him, and waiting for the interesting edition of the Book of Man to summarize its character by showing its pages or remaining shut. It was done delicately, like the tap of a finger-nail on a vase. He rang clear; he had nothing to conceal; and where he was reserved, that is, in speaking of the developed beauty and grace of Renée, he was transparent. She read the sort of man he was; she could also hazard a guess as to the man's present state. She ventured to think him comparatively harmless—for the hour: for she was not the woman to be hoodwinked by man's dark nature because she inclined to think well of a particular man; nor was she one to trust to any man subject to temptation. The wisdom of the Frenchwoman's fortieth year forbade it. A land where the war between the sexes is

honestly acknowledged, and is full of instruction, abounds in precepts; but it ill becomes the veteran to practise rigorously what she would prescribe to young women. She may discriminate; as thus:—Trust no man. Still, this man may be better than that man; and it is bad policy to distrust a reasonably guileless member of the preying sex entirely, and so to lose his good services. Hawks have their uses in destroying vermin; and though we cannot rely upon the taming of hawks, one tied by the leg in a garden preserves the fruit.

'There is a necessity for your leaving us to-morrow, M. Beauchamp?'

'I regret to say, it is imperative, madame.'

'My husband will congratulate me on the pleasure I have, and have long desired, of making your acquaintance, and he will grieve that he has not been so fortunate; he is on service in Africa. My brother, I need not say, will deplore the mischance which has prevented him from welcoming you. I have telegraphed to him; he is at one of the Baths in Germany, and will come assuredly, if there is a prospect of finding you here. None? Supposing my telegram not to fall short of him, I may count on his being here within four days.'

Beauchamp begged her to convey the proper expressions of his regret to M. le Marquis.

'And M. de Croisnel? And Roland, your old comrade and brother-in-arms? What will be their disappointment!' she said.

'I intend to stop for an hour at Rouen on my way back,' said Beauchamp.

She asked if her belle-sœur was aware of the short limitation of his visit.

He had not mentioned it to Madame la Marquise.

'Perhaps you may be moved by the grief of a friend: Renée may persuade you to stay.'

'I came imagining I could be of some use to Madame la Marquise. She writes as if she were telegraphing.'

'Perfectly true of her! For that matter, I saw the letter. Your looks betray a very natural jealousy; but seeing it or not it would have been the same: she and I have no secrets. She was, I may tell you, strictly unable to write more words in the letter. Which brings me to inquire what impression M. d'Henriel made on you yesterday evening.'

'He is particularly handsome.'

'We women think so. Did you take him to be . . . eccentric?'

Beauchamp gave a French jerk of the shoulders.

It confessed the incident of the glove to one who knew it as well as he: but it masked the weight he was beginning to attach to that incident, and Madame d'Auffray was misled. Truly, the Englishman may be just such an ex-lover, uninflammable by virtue of his blood's native coldness; endued with the frozen vanity called pride, which does not seek to be revenged. Under wary espionage, he might be a young woman's friend, though male friend of a half-abandoned wife should write himself down morally saint, mentally sage, medically incurable, if he would win our confidence.

This lady of sharp intelligence was the guardian of Renée during the foolish husband's flights about Paris and over Europe, and, for a proof of her consummate astuteness, Renée had no secrets and had absolute liberty. And hitherto no man could build a boast on her reputation. The liberty she would have had at any cost, as Madame d'Auffray knew; and an attempt to restrict it would have created secrets.

Near upon the breakfast-hour Renée was perceived by them going toward the château at a walking pace. They crossed one of the garden bridges to intercept her. She

started out of some deep meditation, and raised her whip hand to Beauchamp's greeting. 'I had forgotten to tell you, monsieur, that I should be out for some hours in the morning.'

'Are you aware,' said Madame d'Auffray, 'that M. Beauchamp leaves us to-morrow?'

'So soon?' It was uttered hardly with a tone of disappointment.

The marquise alighted, crying holà to the stables, caressed her horse, and sent him off with a smack on the smoking flanks to meet the groom.

'To-morrow? That is very soon; but M. Beauchamp is engaged in an Election, and what have we to induce him to stay?'

'Would it not be better to tell M. Beauchamp why he was invited to come?' rejoined Madame d'Auffray.

The sombre light in Renée's eyes quickened through shadowy spheres of surprise and pain to resolution. She cried, 'You have my full consent,' and left them.

Madame d'Auffray smiled at Beauchamp, to excuse the childishness of the little story she was about to relate; she gave it in the essence, without a commencement or an ending. She had in fact but two or three hurried minutes before the breakfast-bell would ring; and the fan she opened and shut, and at times shaded her head with, was nearly as explicit as her tongue.

He understood that Renée had staked her glove on his coming within a certain number of hours to the briefest wording of invitation possible. Owing to his detention by the storm, M. d'Henriel had won the bet, and now insisted on wearing the glove. 'He is the privileged young madman our women make of a handsome youth,' said Madame d'Auffray.

Where am I? thought Beauchamp—in what land, he would have phrased it, of whirlwinds catching the wits,

and whipping the passions? Calmer than they, but unable to command them, and guessing that Renée's errand of the morning, by which he had lost hours of her, pertained to the glove, he said quiveringly, 'Madame la Marquise objects?'

'We,' replied Madame d'Auffray, 'contend that the glove was not loyally won. The wager was upon your coming to the invitation, not upon your conquering the elements. As to his flaunting the glove for a favour, I would ask you, whom does he advertize by that? Gloves do not wear white; which fact compromises none but the wearer. He picked it up from the ground, and does not restore it; that is all. You see a boy who catches at anything to placard himself. There is a compatriot of yours, a M. Ducie, who assured us you must be with an uncle in your county of Sussex. Of course we ran the risk of the letter missing you, but the chance was worth a glove. Can you believe it, M. Beauchamp? it was I, old woman as I am, I who provoked the silly wager. I have long desired to meet you; and we have little society here, we are desperate with loneliness, half mad with our whims. I said, that if you were what I had heard of you, you would come to us at a word. They dared Madame la Marquise to say the same. I wished to see the friend of Frenchmen, as M. Roland calls you; not merely to see him—to know him, whether he is this perfect friend whose absolute devotion has impressed my dear sister Renée's mind. She respects you: that is a sentiment scarcely complimentary to the ideas of young men. She places you above human creatures: possibly you may not dislike to be worshipped. It is not to be rejected when one's influence is powerful for good. But you leave us to-morrow!'

'I might stay . . .' Beauchamp hesitated to name the number of hours. He stood divided between a sense

of the bubbling shallowness of the life about him, and a thought, grave as an eye dwelling on blood, of sinister things below it.

'I may stay another day or two,' he said, 'if I can be of any earthly service.'

Madame d'Auffray bowed as to a friendly decision on his part, saying, 'It would be a thousand pities to disappoint M. Roland; and it will be offering my brother an amicable chance. I will send him word that you await him; at least, that you defer your departure as long as possible. Ah! now you perceive, M. Beauchamp, now you have become aware of our purely infantile plan to bring you over to us, how very ostensible a punishment it would be were you to remain so short a period.'

Having no designs, he was neither dupe nor sceptic; but he felt oddly entangled, and the dream of his holiday had fled like morning's beams, as a self-deception will at a very gentle shaking.

CHAPTER XXV

THE ADVENTURE OF THE BOAT

Madame d'Auffray passed Renée, whispering on her way to take her seat at the breakfast-table.

Renée did not condescend to whisper. 'Roland will be glad,' she said aloud.

Her low eyelids challenged Beauchamp for a look of indifference. There was more for her to unbosom than Madame d'Auffray had revealed, but the comparative innocence of her position in this new light prompted her to meet him defiantly, if he chose to feel injured. He was attracted by a happy contrast of colour between her dress and complexion, together with a cavalierly charm

in the sullen brows she lifted; and seeing the reverse of a look of indifference on his face, after what he had heard of her frivolousness, she had a fear that it existed.

'Are we not to have M. d'Henriel to-day? he amuses me,' the baronne d'Orbec remarked.

'If he would learn that he was fashioned for that purpose!' exclaimed little M. Livret.

'Do not ask young men for too much head, my friend; he would cease to be amusing.'

'D'Henriel should have been up in the fields at ten this morning,' said M. d'Orbec. 'As to his head, I back him for a clever shot.'

'Or a duelling-sword,' said Renée. 'It is a quality, count it for what we will. Your favourite, Madame la Baronne, is interdicted from presenting himself here so long as he persists in offending me.'

She was requested to explain, and, with the fair ingenuousness which outshines innocence, she touched on the story of the glove.

Ah! what a delicate, what an exciting, how subtle a question!

Had M. d'Henriel the right to possess it? and, having that, had he the right to wear it at his breast?

Beauchamp was dragged into the discussion of the case.

Renée waited curiously for his judgement.

Pleading an apology for the stormy weather, which had detained him, and for his ignorance that so precious an article was at stake, he held, that by the terms of the wager, the glove was lost; the claim to wear it was a matter of taste.

'Matters of taste, monsieur, are not, I think, decided by weapons in your country?' said M. d'Orbec.

'We have no duelling,' said Beauchamp.

The Frenchman imagined the confession to be somewhat humbling, and generously added, 'But you have

your volunteers—a magnificent spectacle of patriotism and national readiness for defence!'

A shrewd pang traversed Beauchamp's heart, as he looked back on his country from the outside and the inside, thinking what amount of patriotic readiness the character of the volunteering signified, in the face of all that England has to maintain. Like a politic islander, he allowed the patriotic spectacle to be imagined; reflecting that it did a sort of service abroad, and had only to be unmasked at home.

'But you surrendered the glove, marquise!' The baronne d'Orbec spoke judicially.

'I flung it to the ground: that made it neutral,' said Renée.

'Hum. He wears it with the dust on it, certainly.'

'And for how long a time,' M. Livret wished to know, 'does this amusing young man proclaim his intention of wearing the glove?'

'Until he can see with us that his Order of Merit is utter kid,' said Madame d'Auffray; and as she had spoken more or less neatly, satisfaction was left residing in the ear of the assembly, and the glove was permitted to be swept away on a fresh tide of dialogue.

The admirable candour of Renée in publicly alluding to M. d'Henriel's foolishness restored a peep of his holiday to Beauchamp. Madame d'Auffray took note of the effect it produced, and quite excused her sister-in-law for intending to produce it; but that speaking out the half-truth that we may put on the mask of the whole, is no new trick; and believing as she did that Renée was in danger with the handsome Count Henri, the practice of such a kind of honesty on her part appeared alarming.

Still it is imprudent to press for confidences when our friend's heart is manifestly trifling with sincerity. Who knows but that some foregone reckless act or word may

have superinduced the healthy shame which cannot speak, which must disguise itself, and is honesty in that form, but roughly troubled would resolve to rank dishonesty? So thought the patient lady, wiser in that than in her perceptions.

Renée made a boast of not persuading her guest to stay, avowing that she would not willingly have him go. Praising him equably, she listened to praise of him with animation. She was dumb and statue-like when Count Henri's name was mentioned. Did not this betray liking for one, subjection to the other? Indeed, there was an Asiatic splendour of animal beauty about M. d'Henriel that would be serpent with most women, Madame d'Auffray conceived; why not with the deserted Renée, who adored beauty of shape and colour, and was compassionate toward a rashness of character that her own unnatural solitariness and quick spirit made her emulous of?

Meanwhile Beauchamp's day of adieu succeeded that of his holiday, and no adieu was uttered. The hours at Tourdestelle had a singular turn for slipping. Interlinked and all as one they swam by, brought evening, brought morning, never varied. They might have varied with such a division as when flame lights up the night or a tempest shades the day, had Renée chosen; she had that power over him. She had no wish to use it; perhaps she apprehended what it would cause her to forfeit. She wished him to respect her; felt that she was under the shadow of the glove, slight though it was while it was nothing but a tale of a lady and a glove; and her desire, like his, was that they should meet daily and dream on, without a variation. He noticed how seldom she led him beyond the grounds of the château. They were to make excursions when her brother came, she said. Roland de Croisnel's colonel, Coïn de Grandchamp,

happened to be engaged in a duel, which great business detained Roland. It supplied Beauchamp with an excuse for staying, that he was angry with himself for being pleased to have; so he attacked the practice of duelling, and next the shrug, wherewith M. Livret and M. d'Orbec sought at first to defend the foul custom, or apologize for it, or plead for it philosophically, or altogether cast it off their shoulders; for the literal interpretation of the shrug in argument is beyond human capacity; it is the point of speech beyond our treasury of language. He attacked the shrug, as he thought, very temperately; but in controlling his native vehemence he grew, perforce of repression, and of incompetency to deliver himself copiously in French, sarcastic. In fine, his contrast of the pretence of their noble country to head civilization, and its encouragement of a custom so barbarous, offended M. d'Orbec and irritated M. Livret.

The latter delivered a brief essay on Gallic blood; the former maintained that Frenchmen were the best judges of their own ways and deeds. Politeness reigned, but politeness is compelled to throw off cloak and jacket when it steps into the arena to meet the encounter of a bull. Beauchamp drew on their word 'solidaire' to assist him in declaring that no civilized nation could be thus independent. Imagining himself in the France of brave ideas, he contrived to strike out sparks of Legitimist ire around him, and found himself breathing the atmosphere of the most primitive nursery of Toryism. Again he encountered the shrug, and he would have it a verbal matter. M. d'Orbec gravely recited the programme of the country party in France. M. Livret carried the war across Channel. You English have retired from active life, like the exhausted author, to turn critic—the critic that sneers: unless we copy you abjectly we are execrable. And what is that sneer? Materially it is

an acrid saliva, withering where it drops; in the way of fellowship it is a corpse-emanation. As to wit, the sneer is the cloak of clumsiness; it is the Pharisee's incense, the hypocrite's pity, the post of exaltation of the fat citizen, etc.; but, said M. Livret, the people using it should have a care that they keep powerful: they make no friends. He terminated with this warning to a nation not devoid of superior merit. M. d'Orbec said less, and was less consoled by his outburst.

In the opinion of Mr. Vivian Ducie, present at the discussion, Beauchamp provoked the lash; for, in the first place, a beautiful woman's apparent favourite should be particularly discreet in all that he says: and next, he should have known that the Gallic shrug over matters political is volcanic—it is the heaving of the mountain, and, like the proverbial Russ, leaps up Tartarly at a scratch. Our newspapers also had been flea-biting M. Livret and his countrymen of late; and, to conclude, over in old England you may fly out against what you will, and there is little beyond a motherly smile, a nurse's rebuke, or a fool's rudeness to answer you. In quick-blooded France you have whip for whip, sneer, sarcasm, claw, fang, tussle, in a trice; and if you choose to comport yourself according to your insular notion of freedom, you are bound to march out to the measured ground at an invitation. To begin by saying that your principles are opposed to it, naturally excites a malicious propensity to try your temper.

A further cause, unknown to Mr. Ducie, of M. Livret's irritation was, that Beauchamp had vexed him on a subject peculiarly dear to him. The celebrated Château Dianet was about to be visited by the guests at Tourdestelle. In common with some French philosophers and English matrons, he cherished a sentimental sad enthusiasm for royal concubines; and when dilating upon one

among them, the ruins of whose family's castle stood in the neighbourhood—Agnès, who was really a kindly soul, though not virtuous—M. Livret had been traversed by Beauchamp with questions as to the condition of the people, the peasantry, that were sweated in taxes to support these lovely frailties. They came oddly from a man in the fire of youth, and a little old gentleman somewhat seduced by the melting image of his theme might well blink at him to ask, of what flesh are you, then? His historic harem was insulted. Personally too, the fair creature picturesquely soiled, intrepid in her amorousness, and ultimately absolved by repentance (a shuddering narrative of her sins under showers of salt drops), cried to him to champion her. Excited by the supposed cold critical mind in Beauchamp, M. Livret painted and painted this lady, tricked her in casuistical niceties, scenes of pomp and boudoir pathos, with many shifting sidelights and a risky word or two, until Renée cried out, 'Spare us the esprit Gaulois, M. Livret!' There was much to make him angry with this Englishman.

'The esprit Gaulois is the sparkle of crystal common sense, madame, and may we never abandon it for a Puritanism that hides its face to conceal its filthiness, like a stagnant pond,' replied M. Livret, flashing.

'It seems, then, that there are two ways of being objectionable,' said Renée.

'Ah! Madame la Marquise, your wit is French,' he breathed low; 'keep your heart so!'

Both M. Livret and M. d'Orbec had forgotten that when Count Henri d'Henriel was received at Tourdestelle, the arrival of the Englishman was pleasantly anticipated by them as an eclipse of the handsome boy; but a foreign interloper is quickly dispossessed of all means of pleasing save that one of taking his departure; and they now talked of Count Henri's disgrace and banishment in a very

warm spirit of sympathy, not at all seeing why it should be made to depend upon the movements of this M. Beauchamp, as it appeared to be. Madame d'Auffray heard some of their dialogue, and hurried with a mouth full of comedy to Renée, who did not reproach them for silly beings, as would be done elsewhere. On the contrary, she appreciated a scene of such absolute comedy, recognizing it instantly as a situation plucked out of human nature. She compared them to republicans that regretted the sovereign they had deposed for a pretender to start up and govern them.

'Who hurries them round to the legitimate king again!' said Madame d'Auffray.

Renée cast her chin up. 'How, my dear?'

'Your husband.'

'What of him?'

'He is returning.'

'What brings him?'

'You should ask who, my Renée! I was sure he would not hear of M. Beauchamp's being here, without an effort to return and do the honours of the château.'

Renée looked hard at her, saying, 'How thoughtful of you! You must have made use of the telegraph wires to inform him that M. Beauchamp was with us.'

'More; I made use of them to inform him that M. Beauchamp was expected.'

'And that was enough to bring him! He pays M. Beauchamp a wonderful compliment.'

'Such as he would pay to no other man, my Renée. Virtually it is the highest of compliments to you. I say that to M. Beauchamp's credit; for Raoul has met him, and, whatever his personal feeling may be, must know your friend is a man of honour.'

'My friend is . . . yes, I have no reason to think otherwise,' Renée replied. Her husband's persistent

and exclusive jealousy of Beauchamp was the singular point in the character of one who appeared to have no sentiment of the kind as regarded men that were much less than men of honour. 'So, then, my sister Agnès,' she said, 'you suggested the invitation of M. Beauchamp for the purpose of spurring my husband to return! Apparently he and I are surrounded by plotters.'

'Am I so very guilty?' said Madame d'Auffray.

'If that mad boy, half idiot, half panther, were by chance to insult M. Beauchamp, you would feel so.'

'You have taken precautions to prevent their meeting; and besides, M. Beauchamp does not fight.'

Renée flushed crimson.

Madame d'Auffray added, 'I do not say that he is other than a perfectly brave and chivalrous gentleman.'

'Oh!' cried Renée, 'do not say it, if ever you should imagine it. Bid Roland speak of him. He is changed, oppressed: I did him a terrible wrong. . . .' She checked herself. 'But the chief thing to do is to keep M. d'Henriel away from him. I suspect M. d'Orbec of a design to make them clash: and you, my dear, will explain why, to flatter me. Believe me, I thirst for flattery; I have had none since M. Beauchamp came: and you, so acute, must have seen the want of it in my face. But you, so skilful, Agnès, will manage these men. Do you know, Agnès, that the pride of a woman so incredibly clever as you have shown me you are should resent their intrigues and overthrow them. As for me, I thought I could command M. d'Henriel, and I find he has neither reason in him nor obedience. Singular to say, I knew him just as well a week back as I do now, and then I liked him for his qualities—or the absence of any. But how shall we avoid him on the road to Dianet? He is aware that we are going.'

'Take M. Beauchamp by boat,' said Madame d'Auffray.

'The river winds to within a five minutes' walk of Dianet; we could go by boat,' Renée said musingly. 'I thought of the boat. But does it not give the man a triumph that we should seem to try to elude him? What matter! Still, I do not like him to be the falcon, and Nevil Beauchamp the . . . little bird. So it is, because we began badly, Agnès!'

'Was it my fault?'

'Mine. Tell me: the legitimate king returns—when?'

'In two days or three.'

'And his rebel subjects are to address him—how?'

Madame d'Auffray smote the point of a finger softly on her cheek.

'Will they be pardoned?' said Renée.

'It is for *him* to kneel, my dearest.'

'Legitimacy kneeling for forgiveness is a painful picture, Agnès. Legitimacy jealous of a foreigner is an odd one. However, we are women, born to our lot. If we could rise en masse!—but we cannot. Embrace me.'

Madame d'Auffray embraced her, without an idea that she assisted in performing the farewell of their confidential intimacy.

When Renée trifled with Count Henri, it was playing with fire, and she knew it; and once or twice she bemoaned to Agnès d'Auffray her abandoned state, which condemned her, for the sake of the sensation of living, to have recourse to perilous pastimes; but she was revolted, as at a piece of treachery, that Agnès should have suggested the invitation of Nevil Beauchamp with the secret design of winning home her husband to protect her. This, for one reason, was because Beauchamp gave her no notion of danger; none, therefore, of requiring protection; and the presence of her husband could not but be hateful to him, an undeserved infliction. To her it was

intolerable that they should be brought into contact. It seemed almost as hard that she should have to dismiss Beauchamp to preclude their meeting. She remembered, nevertheless, a certain desperation of mind, scarce imaginable in the retrospect, by which, trembling, fever-smitten, scorning herself, she had been reduced to hope for Nevil Beauchamp's coming as for a rescue. The night of the storm had roused her heart. Since then his perfect friendliness had lulled, his air of thoughtfulness had interested it; and the fancy that he, who neither reproached nor sentimentalized, was to be infinitely compassionated, stirred up remorse. She could not tell her friend Agnès of these feelings while her feelings were angered against her friend. So she talked lightly of 'the legitimate king,' and they embraced: a situation of comedy quite as true as that presented by the humble admirers of the brilliant châtelaine.

Beauchamp had the pleasure of rowing Madame la Marquise to the short shaded walk separating the river from Château Dianet, whither M. d'Orbec went on horseback, and Madame d'Auffray and M. Livret were driven. The portrait of Diane of Dianet was praised for the beauty of the dame, a soft-fleshed acutely featured person, a fresh-of-the-toilette face, of the configuration of head of the cat, relieved by a delicately aquiline nose; and it could only be the cat of fairy metamorphosis which should stand for that illustration: brows and chin made an acceptable triangle, and eyes and mouth could be what she pleased for mice or monarchs. M. Livret did not gainsay the impeachment of her by a great French historian, tender to women, to frailties in particular—yes, she was cold, perhaps grasping: but dwell upon her in her character of woman; conceive her existing, to estimate the charm of her graciousness. Name the two countries which alone have produced THE WOMAN, the ideal woman, the woman

of art, whose beauty, grace, and wit offer her to our contemplation in an atmosphere above the ordinary conditions of the world: these two countries are France and Greece! None other give you the perfect woman, the woman who conquers time, as she conquers men, by virtue of the divinity in her blood; and she, as little as illustrious heroes, is to be judged by the laws and standards of lesser creatures. In fashioning her, nature and art have worked together: in her, poetry walks the earth. The question of good or bad is entirely to be put aside: it is a rustic's impertinence—a bourgeois' vulgarity. She is pre-eminent, voilà tout. Has she grace and beauty? Then you are answered: such possessions are an assurance that her influence in the aggregate must be for good. Thunder, destructive to insects, refreshes earth: so she. So sang the rhapsodist. Possibly a scholarly little French gentleman, going down the grey slopes of sixty to second childishness, recovers a second juvenility in these enthusiasms; though what it is that inspires our matrons to take up with them is unimaginable. M. Livret's ardour was a contrast to the young Englishman's vacant gaze at Diane, and the symbols of her goddesship running along the walls, the bed, the cabinets, everywhere that the chaste device could find frontage and a corner.

M. d'Orbec remained outside the château inspecting the fish-ponds. When they rejoined him he complimented Beauchamp semi-ironically on his choice of the river's quiet charms in preference to the dusty roads. Madame de Rouaillout said, 'Come, M. d'Orbec; what if you surrender your horse to M. Beauchamp, and row me back?' He changed colour, hesitated, and declined: he had an engagement to call on M. d'Henriel.

'When did you see him?' said she.

He was confused. 'It is not long since, madame.'

'On the road?'

'Coming along the road.'

'And our glove?'

'Madame la Marquise, if I may trust my memory, M. d'Henriel was not in official costume.'

Renée allowed herself to be reassured.

A ceremonious visit that M. Livret insisted on was paid to the chapel of Diane, where she had worshipped and laid her widowed ashes, which, said M. Livret, the fiends of the Revolution would not let rest.

He raised his voice to denounce them.

It was Roland de Croisnel that answered: 'The Revolution was our grandmother, monsieur, and I cannot hear her abused.'

Renée caught her brother by the hand. He stepped out of the chapel with Beauchamp to embrace him; then kissed Renée, and, remarking that she was pale, fetched flooding colour to her cheeks. He was hearty air to them after the sentimentalism they had been hearing. Beauchamp and he walked like loving comrades at school, questioning, answering, chattering, laughing,—a beautiful sight to Renée, and she looked at Agnès d'Auffray to ask her whether 'this Englishman' was not one of them in his frankness and freshness.

Roland stopped to turn to Renée. 'I met d'Henriel on my ride here,' he said with a sharp inquisitive expression of eye that passed immediately.

'You rode here from Tourdestelle, then,' said Renée.

'Has he been one of the company, marquise?'

'Did he ride by you without speaking, Roland?'

'Thus.' Roland described a Spanish caballero's formallest salutation, saying to Beauchamp, 'Not the best sample of our young Frenchman;—woman-spoiled! Not that the better kind of article need be spoiled by them—heaven forbid that! Friend Nevil,' he spoke lower, 'do you know, you have something of the prophet

in you? I remember: much has come true. An old spoiler of women is worse than one spoiled by them! Ah, well: and Madame Culling? and your seven-feet high uncle? And have you a fleet to satisfy Nevil Beauchamp yet? You shall see a trial of our new field-guns at Rouen.'

They were separated with difficulty. Renée wished her brother to come in the boat; and he would have done so, but for his objection to have his Arab bestridden by a man unknown to him.

'My love is a four-foot, and here 's my love,' Roland said, going outside the gilt gate-rails to the graceful little beast, that acknowledged his ownership with an arch and swing of the neck round to him.

He mounted and called, 'Au revoir, M. le Capitaine.'

'Au revoir, M. le Commandant,' cried Beauchamp.

'Admiral and marshal, each of us in good season,' said Roland. 'Thanks to your promotion, I had a letter from my sister. Advance a grade, and I may get another.'

Beauchamp thought of the strange gulf now between him and the time when he pined to be a commodore, and an admiral. The gulf was bridged as he looked at Renée petting Roland's horse.

'Is there in the world so lovely a creature?' she said, and appealed fondlingly to the beauty that brings out beauty, and, bidding it disdain rivalry, rivalled it insomuch that in a moment of trance Beauchamp with his bodily vision beheld her, not there, but on the Lido of Venice, shining out of the years gone.

Old love reviving may be love of a phantom after all. We can, if it must revive, keep it to the limits of a ghostly love. The ship in the Arabian tale coming within the zone of the magnetic mountain, flies all its bolts and bars, and becomes sheer timbers, but that is the carelessness of the ship's captain; and hitherto Beauchamp

could applaud himself for steering with prudence, while Renée's attractions warned more than they beckoned. She was magnetic to him as no other woman was. Then whither his course but homeward?

After they had taken leave of their host and hostess of Château Dianet, walking across a meadow to a line of charmilles that led to the river-side, he said, 'Now I have seen Roland I shall have to decide upon going.'

'Wantonly won is deservedly lost,' said Renée. 'But do not disappoint my Roland much because of his foolish sister. Is he not looking handsome? And he is young to be a commandant, for we have no interest at this Court. They kept him out of the last war! My father expects to find you at Tourdestelle, and how account to him for your hurried flight?—save with the story of that which brought you to us!'

'The glove? I shall beg for the fellow to it before I depart, marquise.'

'You perceived my disposition to light-headedness, monsieur, when I was a girl.'

'I said that I—— But the past is dust. Shall I ever see you in England?'

'That country seems to frown on me. But if I do not go there, nor you come here, except to imperious mysterious invitations, which will not be repeated, the future is dust as well as the past: for me, at least. Dust here, dust there!—if one could be like a silk-worm, and live lying on the leaf one feeds on, it would be a sort of answer to the riddle—living out of the dust, and in the present. I find none in my religion. No doubt, Madame de Brézé did: why did you call Diane so to M. Livret?'

She looked at him smiling as they came out of the shadow of the clipped trees. He was glancing about for the boat.

'The boat is across the river,' Renée said, in a voice

that made him seek her eyes for an explanation of the dead sound. She was very pale. 'You have perfect command of yourself? For my sake!' she said.

He looked round.

Standing up in the boat, against the opposite bank, and leaning with crossed legs on one of the sculls planted in the gravel of the river, Count Henri d'Henriel's handsome figure presented itself to Beauchamp's gaze.

With a dryness that smacked of his uncle Everard Romfrey, Beauchamp said of the fantastical posture of the young man, 'One can do that on fresh water.'

Renée did not comprehend the sailor-sarcasm of the remark; but she also commented on the statuesque appearance of Count Henri: 'Is the pose for photography or for sculpture?'

Neither of them showed a sign of surprise or of impatience.

M. d'Henriel could not maintain the attitude. He uncrossed his legs deliberately, drooped hat in hand, and came paddling over; apologized indolently, and said, 'I am not, I believe, trespassing on the grounds of Tourdestelle, Madame la Marquise!'

'You happen to be in my boat, M. le Comte,' said Renée.

'Permit me, madame.' He had set one foot on shore, with his back to Beauchamp, and reached a hand to assist her step into the boat.

Beauchamp caught fast hold of the bows while Renée laid a finger on Count Henri's shoulder to steady herself.

The instant she had taken her seat, Count Henri dashed the scull's blade at the bank to push off with her, but the boat was fast. His manœuvre had been foreseen. Beauchamp swung on board like the last seaman of a launch, and crouched as the boat rocked away to the stream; and still Count Henri leaned on the scull, not in a chosen

attitude, but for positive support. He had thrown his force into the blow, to push off triumphantly, and leave his rival standing. It occurred that the boat's brief resistance and rocking away agitated his artificial equipoise, and, by the operation of inexorable laws, the longer he leaned across an extending surface the more was he dependent; so that when the measure of the water exceeded the length of his failing support on land, there was no help for it: he pitched in. His grimace of chagrin at the sight of Beauchamp securely established, had scarcely yielded to the grimness of feature of the man who feels he must go, as he took the plunge; and these two emotions combined to make an extraordinary countenance.

He went like a gallant gentleman; he threw up his heels to clear the boat, dropping into about four feet of water, and his first remark on rising was, 'I trust, madame, I have not had the misfortune to splash you.'

Then he waded to the bank, scrambled to his feet, and drew out his moustachios to their curving ends. Renée nodded sharply to Beauchamp to bid him row. He, with less of wisdom, having seized the floating scull abandoned by Count Henri, and got it ready for the stroke, said a word of condolence to the dripping man.

Count Henri's shoulders and neck expressed a kind of negative that, like a wet dog's shake of the head, ended in an involuntary whole length shudder, dog-like and deplorable to behold. He must have been conscious of this miserable exhibition of himself; he turned to Beauchamp: 'You are, I am informed, a sailor, monsieur. I compliment you on your naval tactics: our next meeting will be on land. Au revoir, monsieur. Madame la Marquise, I have the honour to salute you.'

With these words he retreated.

'Row quickly, I beg of you,' Renée said to Beauchamp. Her desire was to see Roland, and open her heart to her brother; for now it had to be opened. Not a minute must be lost to prevent further mischief. And who was guilty? she. Her heart clamoured of her guilt to waken a cry of innocence. A disdainful pity for the superb young savage just made ludicrous, relieved him of blame, implacable though he was. He was nothing; an accident—a fool. But he might become a terrible instrument of punishment. The thought of that possibility gave it an aspect of retribution, under which her cry of innocence was insufferable in its feebleness. It would have been different with her if Beauchamp had taken advantage of her fever of anxiety, suddenly appeased by the sight of him on the evening of his arrival at Tourdestelle after the storm, to attempt a renewal of their old broken love-bonds. Then she would have seen only a conflict between two men, neither of whom could claim a more secret right than the other to be called her lover, and of whom both were on a common footing, and partly despicable. But Nevil Beauchamp had behaved as her perfect true friend, in the character she had hoped for when she summoned him. The sense of her guilt lay in the recognition that he had saved her. From what? From the consequences of delirium rather than from love: surely delirium, founded on delusion; love had not existed. She had said to Count Henri, 'You speak to me of love. I was beloved when I was a girl, before my marriage, and for years I have not seen or corresponded with the man who loved me, and I have only to lift my finger now and he will come to me, and not once will he speak to me of love.' Those were the words originating the wager of the glove. But what of her, if Nevil Beauchamp had not come?

Her heart jumped, and she blushed ungovernably in

his face, as if he were seeing her withdraw her foot from the rock's edge, and had that instant rescued her. But how came it she had been so helpless? She could ask; she could not answer.

Thinking, talking to her heart, was useless. The deceiver simply feigned utter condemnation to make partial comfort acceptable. She burned to do some act of extreme self-abasement that should bring an unwonted degree of wrath on her externally, and so re-entitle her to consideration in her own eyes. She burned to be interrogated, to have to weep, to be scorned, abused, and forgiven, that she might say she did not deserve pardon. Beauchamp was too English, evidently too blind, for the description of judge-accuser she required; one who would worry her without mercy, until—disgraced by the excess of torture inflicted—he should reinstate her by as much as he had overcharged his accusation, and a little more. Reasonably enough, instinctively in fact, she shunned the hollow of an English ear. A surprise was in reserve for her.

Beauchamp gave up rowing. As he rested on the sculls, his head was bent and turned toward the bank. Renée perceived an over-swollen monster gourd that had strayed from a garden adjoining the river, and hung sliding heavily down the bank on one greenish yellow cheek, in prolonged contemplation of its image in the mirror below. Apparently this obese Narcissus enchained his attention.

She tapped her foot. 'Are you tired of rowing, monsieur?'

'It was exactly here,' said he, 'that you told me you expected your husband's return.'

She glanced at the gourd, bit her lip, and, colouring, said, 'At what point of the river did I request you to congratulate me on it?'

She would not have said that, if she had known the thoughts at work within him.

He set the boat swaying from side to side, and at once the hugeous reflection of that conceivably self-enamoured bulk quavered and distended, and was shattered in a thousand dancing fragments, to re-unite and recompose its maudlin air of imaged satisfaction.

She began to have a vague idea that he was indulging grotesque fancies.

Very strangely, the ridiculous thing, in the shape of an over-stretched likeness, that she never would have seen had he indicated it directly, became transfused from his mind to hers by his abstract, half-amused observation of the great dancing gourd—that capering antiquity, lumbering volatility, wandering, self-adored, gross bald Cupid, elatest of nondescripts! Her senses imagined the impressions agitating Beauchamp's, and exaggerated them beyond limit; and when he amazed her with a straight look into her eyes, and the words, 'Better let it be a youth—and live, than fall back to that!' she understood him immediately; and, together with her old fear of his impetuosity and downrightness, came the vivid recollection, like a bright finger pointing upon darkness, of what foul destiny, magnified by her present abhorrence of it, he would have saved her from in the days of Venice and Touraine, and unto what loathly example of the hideous grotesque she, in spite of her lover's foresight on her behalf, had become allied.

Face to face as they sat, she had no defence for her scarlet cheeks; her eyes wavered.

'We will land here; the cottagers shall row the boat up,' she said.

'Somewhere—anywhere,' said Beauchamp. 'But I must speak. I will tell you now. I do not think you to blame—barely; not in my sight; though no man living

would have suffered as I should. Probably some days more and you would have been lost. You looked for me! Trust your instinct now I 'm with you as well as when I 'm absent. Have you courage? that 's the question. You have years to live. Can you live them in this place—with honour? and alive really?'

Renée's eyes grew wide; she tried to frown, and her brows merely twitched; to speak, and she was inarticulate. His madness, miraculous penetration, and the super-masculine charity in him, unknown to the world of young men in their treatment of women, excited, awed, and melted her. He had seen the whole truth of her relations with M. d'Henriel!—the wickedness of them in one light, the innocence in another; and without prompting a confession he forgave her. Could she believe it? This was love, and manly love.

She yearned to be on her feet, to feel the possibility of an escape from him.

She pointed to a landing. He sprang to the bank. 'It could end in nothing else,' he said, 'unless you beat cold to me. And now I have your hand, Renée! It 's the hand of a living woman, you have no need to tell me that; but faithful to her comrade! I can swear it for her—faithful to a *true* alliance! You are not married, you are simply chained: and you are terrorized. What a perversion of you it is! It wrecks you. But with me? Am I not your lover? You and I are one life. What have we suffered for but to find this out and act on it? Do I not know that a woman lives, and is not the rooted piece of vegetation hypocrites and tyrants expect her to be? Act on it, I say; own me, break the chains, come to me; say, Nevil Beauchamp or death! And death for you? But you are poisoned and thwarted—dying, as you live now: worse, shaming the Renée I knew. Ah—Venice! But now we are both of us wiser

and stronger: we have gone through fire. Who foretold it? This day, and this misery and perversion that we can turn to joy, if we will—if you will! No heart to dare is no heart to love!—answer that! Shall I see you cower away from me again? Not this time!'

He swept on in a flood, uttered mad things, foolish things, and things of an insight electrifying to her. Through the cottager's garden, across a field, and within the park gates of Tourdestelle it continued unceasingly; and deeply was she won by the rebellious note in all that he said, deeply too by his disregard of the vulgar arts of wooers: she detected none. He did not speak so much to win as to help her to see with her own orbs. Nor was it roughly or chidingly, though it was absolutely, that he stripped her of the veil a wavering woman will keep to herself from her heart's lord if she can.

They arrived long after the boat at Tourdestelle, and Beauchamp might believe he had prevailed with her, but for her forlorn repetition of the question he had put to her idly and as a new idea, instead of significantly, with a recollection and a doubt—'Have I courage, Nevil?'

The grain of common sense in cowardice caused her to repeat it when her reason was bedimmed, and passion assumed the right to show the way of right and wrong.

CHAPTER XXVI

MR. BLACKBURN TUCKHAM

Some time after Beauchamp had been seen renewing his canvass in Bevisham a report reached Mount Laurels that he was lame of a leg. The wits of the opposite camp revived the French Marquees, but it was generally

acknowledged that he had come back without the lady: she was invisible. Cecilia Halkett rode home with her father on a dusky Autumn evening, and found the card of Commander Beauchamp awaiting her. He might have stayed to see her, she thought. Ladies are not customarily so very late in returning from a ride on chill evenings of Autumn. Only a quarter of an hour was between his visit and her return. The shortness of the interval made it appear the deeper gulf. She noticed that her father particularly inquired of the man-servant whether Captain Beauchamp limped. It seemed a piece of kindly anxiety on his part. The captain was mounted, the man said. Cecilia was conscious of rumours being abroad relating to Nevil's expedition to France; but he had enemies, and was at war with them, and she held herself indifferent to tattle. This card bearing his name, recently in his hand, was much more insidious and precise. She took it to her room to look at it. Nothing but his name and naval title was inscribed; no pencilled line; she had not expected to discover one. The simple card was her dark light, as a handkerchief, a flower, a knot of riband, has been for men luridly illuminated by such small sparks to fling their beams on shadows and read the monstrous things for truths. Her purer virgin blood was not inflamed. She read the signification of the card sadly as she did clearly. What she could not so distinctly imagine was, how he could reconcile the devotion to his country, which he had taught her to put her faith in, with his unhappy subjection to Madame de Rouaillout. How could the nobler sentiment exist side by side with one that was lawless? Or was the wildness characteristic of his political views proof of a nature inclining to disown moral ties? She feared so; he did not speak of the clergy respectfully. Reading in the dark, she was forced to rely on her social instincts, and she distrusted her

personal feelings as much as she could, for she wished to know the truth of him; anything, pain and heartrending, rather than the shutting of the eyes in an unworthy abandonment to mere emotion and fascination. Cecilia's love could not be otherwise given to a man, however near she might be drawn to love—though she should suffer the pangs of love cruelly.

She placed his card in her writing-desk; she had his likeness there. Commander Beauchamp encouraged the art of photography, as those that make long voyages do, in reciprocating what they petition their friends for. Mrs. Rosamund Culling had a whole collection of photographs of him, equal to a visual history of his growth in chapters, from boyhood to midshipmanship and to manhood. The specimen possessed by Cecilia was one of a couple that Beauchamp had forwarded to Mrs. Grancey Lespel on the day of his departure for France, and was a present from that lady, purchased, like so many presents, at a cost Cecilia would have paid heavily in gold to have been spared, namely, a public blush. She was allowed to make her choice, and she chose the profile, repeating a remark of Mrs. Culling's, that it suggested an arrow-head in the upflight; whereupon Mr. Stukely Culbrett had said, 'Then there is the man, for he is undoubtedly a projectile'; nor were politically-hostile punsters on an arrow-head inactive. But Cecilia was thinking of the side-face she (less intently than Beauchamp at hers) had glanced at during the drive into Bevisham. At that moment, she fancied Madame de Rouaillout might be doing likewise; and oh that she had the portrait of the French lady as well!

Next day her father tossed her a photograph of another gentleman, coming out of a letter he had received from old Mrs. Beauchamp. He asked her opinion of it. She said, 'I think he would have suited Bevisham better than

Captain Baskelett.' Of the original, who presented himself at Mount Laurels in the course of the week, she had nothing to say, except that he was very like the photograph, very unlike Nevil Beauchamp. 'Yes, there I 'm of your opinion,' her father observed. The gentleman was Mr. Blackburn Tuckham, and it was amusing to find an exuberant Tory in one who was the reverse of the cavalier type. Nevil and he seemed to have been sorted to the wrong sides. Mr. Tuckham had a round head, square flat forehead, and ruddy face; he stood as if his feet claimed the earth under them for his own, with a certain shortness of leg that detracted from the majesty of his resemblance to our Eighth Harry, but increased his air of solidity; and he was authoritative in speaking. 'Let me set you right, sir,' he said sometimes to Colonel Halkett, and that was his modesty. 'You are altogether wrong,' Miss Halkett heard herself informed, which was his courtesy. He examined some of her water-colour drawings before sitting down to dinner, approved of them, but thought it necessary to lay a broad finger on them to show their defects. On the question of politics, 'I venture to state,' he remarked, in anything but the tone of a venture, 'that no educated man of ordinary sense who has visited our colonies will come back a Liberal.' As for a man of sense and education being a Radical, he scouted the notion with a pooh sufficient to awaken a vessel in the doldrums. He said carelessly of Commander Beauchamp, that he might think himself one. Either the Radical candidate for Bevisham stood self-deceived, or—the other supposition. Mr. Tuckham would venture to state that no English gentleman, exempt from an examination by order of the Commissioners of Lunacy, could be sincerely a Radical. 'Not a bit of it; nonsense,' he replied to Miss Halkett's hint at the existence of Radical views; 'that is, those views are out of

politics; they are matters for the police. Dutch dykes are built to shut away the sea from cultivated land, and of course it 's a part of the business of the Dutch Government to keep up the dykes, and of ours to guard against the mob; but that is only a political consideration after the mob has been allowed to undermine our defences.'

'They speak,' said Miss Halkett, 'of educating the people to fit them——'

'They speak of commanding the winds and tides,' he cut her short, with no clear analogy; 'wait till we have a storm. It 's a delusion amounting to dementedness to suppose, that with the people inside our defences, we can be taming them and tricking them. As for sending them to school after giving them power, it 's like asking a wild beast to sit down to dinner with us—he wants the whole table and us too. The best education for the people is government. They 're beginning to see that in Lancashire at last. I ran down to Lancashire for a couple of days on my landing, and I 'm thankful to say Lancashire is preparing to take a step back. Lancashire leads the country. Lancashire men see what this Liberalism has done for the Labour-market.'

'Captain Beauchamp considers that the political change coming over the minds of the manufacturers is due to the large fortunes they have made,' said Miss Halkett, maliciously associating a Radical prophet with him.

He was unaffected by it, and continued: 'Property is ballast as well as treasure. I call property funded good sense. I would give it every privilege. If we are to speak of patriotism, I say the possession of property guarantees it. I maintain that the lead of men of property is in most cases sure to be the safe one.'

'*I* think so,' Colonel Halkett interposed, and he spoke as a man of property.

Mr. Tuckham grew fervent in his allusions to our

wealth and our commerce. Having won the race and gained the prize, shall we let it slip out of our grasp? Upon this topic his voice descended to tones of priestlike awe: for are we not the envy of the world? Our wealth is countless, fabulous. It may well inspire veneration. And we have won it with our hands, thanks (he implied it so) to our religion. We are rich in money and industry, in those two things only, and the corruption of an energetic industry is constantly threatened by the profusion of wealth giving it employment. This being the case, either your Radicals do not know the first conditions of human nature, or they do; and if they do they are traitors, and the Liberals opening the gates to them are fools: and some are knaves. We perish as a Great Power if we cease to look sharp ahead, hold firm together, and make the utmost of what we possess. The word for the performance of those duties is Toryism: a word with an older flavour than Conservatism, and Mr. Tuckham preferred it. By all means let workmen be free men: but a man must earn his freedom daily, or he will become a slave in some form or another: and the way to earn it is by work and obedience to right direction. In a country like ours, open on all sides to the competition of intelligence and strength, with a Press that is the voice of all parties and of every interest; in a country offering to your investments three and a half and more per cent., secure as the firmament!—

He perceived an amazed expression on Miss Halkett's countenance; and 'Ay,' said he, 'that means the certainty of food to millions of mouths, and comforts, if not luxuries, to half the population. A safe percentage on savings is the basis of civilization.'

But he had bruised his eloquence, for though you may start a sermon from stones to hit the stars, he must be a practised orator who shall descend out of the abstract to

take up a heavy lump of the concrete without unseating himself, and he stammered and came to a flat ending:—'In such a country—well, I venture to say, we have a right to condemn in advance disturbers of the peace, and they must show very good cause indeed for not being summarily held to account for their conduct.'

The allocution was not delivered in the presence of an audience other than sympathetic, and Miss Halkett rightly guessed that it was intended to strike Captain Beauchamp by ricochet. He puffed at the mention of Beauchamp's name. He had read a reported speech or two of Beauchamp's, and shook his head over a quotation of the stuff, as though he would have sprung at him like a lion, but for his enrolment as a constable.

Not a whit the less did Mr. Tuckham drink his claret relishingly, and he told stories incidental to his travels now and then, commended the fishing here, the shooting there, and in some few places the cookery, with much bright emphasis when it could be praised; it appeared to be an endearing recollection to him. Still, as a man of progress, he declared his belief that we English would ultimately turn out the best cooks, having indubitably the best material. 'Our incomprehensible political pusillanimity' was the one sad point about us: we had been driven from surrender to surrender.

'Like geese upon a common, I have heard it said,' Miss Halkett assisted him to Dr. Shrapnel's comparison.

Mr. Tuckham laughed, and half yawned and sighed, 'Dear me!'

His laughter was catching, and somehow more persuasive of the soundness of the man's heart and head than his remarks.

She would have been astonished to know that a gentleman so uncourtly, if not uncouth—judged by the standard of the circle she moved in—and so unskilled in pleasing

the sight and hearing of ladies as to treat them like junior comrades, had raised the vow within himself on seeing her: You, or no woman!

The colonel delighted in him, both as a strong and able young fellow, and a refreshingly aggressive recruit of his party, who was for onslaught, and invoked common sense, instead of waving the flag of sentiment in retreat; a very horse-artillery man of Tories. Regretting immensely that Mr. Tuckham had not reached England earlier, that he might have occupied the seat for Bevisham, about to be given to Captain Baskelett, Colonel Halkett set up a contrast of Blackburn Tuckham and Nevil Beauchamp; a singular instance of unfairness, his daughter thought, considering that the distinct contrast presented by the circumstances was that of Mr. Tuckham and Captain Baskelett.

'It seems to me, papa, that you are contrasting the idealist and the realist,' she said.

'Ah, well, we don't want the idealist in politics,' muttered the colonel.

Latterly he also had taken to shaking his head over Nevil: Cecilia dared not ask him why.

Mr. Tuckham arrived at Mount Laurels on the eve of the Nomination day in Bevisham. An article in the *Bevisham Gazette* calling upon all true Liberals to demonstrate their unanimity by a multitudinous show of hands, he ascribed to the writing of a child of Erin; and he was highly diverted by the Liberal's hiring of Paddy to 'pen and spout' for him. 'A Scotchman manages, and Paddy does the sermon for *all* their journals,' he said off-hand; adding: 'And the English are the compositors, I suppose.' You may take that for an instance of the national spirit of Liberal newspapers!

'Ah!' sighed the colonel, as at a case clearly demonstrated against them.

A drive down to Bevisham to witness the ceremony of the nomination in the town-hall sobered Mr. Tuckham's disposition to generalize. Beauchamp had the show of hands, and to say with Captain Baskelett, that they were a dirty majority, was beneath Mr. Tuckham's verbal antagonism. He fell into a studious reserve, noting everything, listening to everybody, greatly to Colonel Halkett's admiration of one by nature a talker and a thunderer.

The show of hands Mr. Seymour Austin declared to be the most delusive of electoral auspices; and it proved so. A little later than four o'clock in the afternoon of the election-day, Cecilia received a message from her father telling her that both of the Liberals were headed; 'Beauchamp nowhere.'

Mrs. Grancey Lespel was the next herald of Beauchamp's defeat. She merely stated the fact that she had met the colonel and Mr. Blackburn Tuckham driving on the outskirts of the town, and had promised to bring Cecilia the final numbers of the poll. Without naming them, she unrolled the greater business in her mind.

'A man who in the middle of an Election goes over to France to fight a duel, can hardly expect to win; he has all the morality of an English borough opposed to him,' she said; and seeing the young lady stiffen: 'Oh! the duel is positive,' she dropped her voice. 'With the husband. Who else could it be? And returns invalided. That is evidence. My nephew Palmet has it from Vivian Ducie, and he is acquainted with her tolerably intimately, and the story is, she was overtaken in her flight in the night, and the duel followed at eight o'clock in the morning; but her brother insisted on fighting for Captain Beauchamp, and I cannot tell you how—but *his* place in it I can't explain—there was a beau jeune homme, and it 's quite possible that *he* should have been the person

to stand up against the marquis. At any rate, he insulted Captain Beauchamp, or thought your hero had insulted him, and the duel was with one or the other. It matters exceedingly little with whom, if a duel was fought, and you see we have quite established that.'

'I hope it is not true,' said Cecilia.

'My dear, that is the Christian thing to do,' said Mrs. Lespel. 'Duelling is horrible: though those Romfreys! —and the Beauchamps were just as bad, or nearly. Colonel Richard fought for a friend's wife or sister. But in these days duelling is incredible. It was an inhuman practice always, and it is now worse—it is a breach of manners. I would hope it is not true; and you may mean that I have it from Lord Palmet. But I know Vivian Ducie as well as I know my nephew, and if he distinctly mentions an occurrence, we may too surely rely on the truth of it; he is not a man to spread mischief. Are you unaware that he met Captain Beauchamp at the château of the marquise? The whole story was acted under his eyes. He had only to take up his pen. Generally he favours me with his French gossip. I suppose there were circumstances in this affair more suitable to Palmet than to me. He wrote a description of Madame de Rouaillout that set Palmet strutting about for an hour. I have no doubt she must be a very beautiful woman, for a Frenchwoman: not regular features; expressive, capricious. Vivian Ducie lays great stress on her eyes and eyebrows, and, I think, her hair. With a Frenchwoman's figure, that is enough to make men crazy. He says her husband deserves—but what will not young men write? It is deeply to be regretted that Englishmen abroad—women the same, I fear—get the Continental tone in morals. But how Captain Beauchamp could expect to carry on an Election and an intrigue together, only a head like his can tell us. Grancey is in

high indignation with him. It does not concern the Election, you can imagine. Something that man Dr. Shrapnel has done, which he says Captain Beauchamp could have prevented. Quarrels of men! I have instructed Palmet to write to Vivian Ducie for a photograph of Madame de Rouaillout. Do you know, one has a curiosity to see the face of the woman for whom a man ruins himself. But I say again, he ought to be married.'

'That there may be two victims?' Cecilia said it smiling.

She was young in suffering, and thought, as the unseasoned and inexperienced do, that a mask is a concealment.

'Married—settled; to have him bound in honour,' said Mrs. Lespel. 'I had a conversation with him when he was at Itchincope; and his look, and what I know of his father, that gallant and handsome Colonel Richard Beauchamp, would give one a kind of confidence in him; supposing always that he is not struck with one of those deadly passions that are like snakes, like magic. I positively believe in them. I have seen them. And if they end, they end as if the man were burnt out, and was ashes inside; as you see Mr. Stukely Culbrett, all cynicism. You would not now suspect him of a passion! It is true. Oh, I know it! That is what the men go to. The women die. Vera Winter died at twenty-three. Caroline Ormond was hardly older. You know her story; everybody knows it. The most singular and convincing case was that of Lord Alfred Burnley and Lady Susan Gardiner, wife of the general; and there was an instance of two similarly afflicted—a very rare case, most rare: they never could meet to part! It was almost ludicrous. It is now quite certain that they did not conspire to meet. At last the absolute fatality became so well

understood by the persons immediately interested—— You laugh?'

'Do I laugh?' said Cecilia.

'We should all know the world, my dear, and you are a strong head. The knowledge is only dangerous for fools. And if romance is occasionally ridiculous, as I own it can be, humdrum, I protest, is everlastingly so. By-the-by, I should have told you that Captain Beauchamp was one hundred and ninety below Captain Baskelett when the state of the poll was handed to me. The gentleman driving with your father compared the Liberals to a parachute cut away from the balloon. Is he army or navy?'

'He is a barrister, and some cousin of Captain Beauchamp.'

'I should not have taken him for a Beauchamp,' said Mrs. Lespel; and, resuming her worldly sagacity, 'I should not like to be in opposition to that young man.'

She seemed to have a fancy unexpressed regarding Mr. Tuckham. Reminding herself that she might be behind time at Itchincope, where the guests would be numerous that evening, and the song of triumph loud, with Captain Baskelett to lead it, she kissed the young lady she had unintentionally been torturing so long, and drove away.

Cecilia hoped it was not true. Her heart sank heavily under the belief that it was. She imagined the world abusing Nevil and casting him out, as those electors of Bevisham had just done, and impulsively she pleaded for him, and became drowned in criminal blushes that forced her to defend herself with a determination not to believe the dreadful story, though she continued mitigating the wickedness of it; as if, by a singular inversion of the fact, her clear good sense excused, and it was her heart that

condemned him. She dwelt fondly on an image of the 'gallant and handsome Colonel Richard Beauchamp,' conjured up in her mind from the fervour of Mrs. Lespel when speaking of Nevil's father, whose chivalry threw a light on the son's, and whose errors, condoned by time, and with a certain brilliancy playing above them, interceded strangely on behalf of Nevil.

CHAPTER XXVII

A SHORT SIDELOOK AT THE ELECTION

The brisk Election-day, unlike that wearisome but instructive canvass of the Englishman in his castle vicatim, teaches little; and its humours are those of a badly-managed Christmas pantomime without a columbine—old tricks, no graces. Nevertheless, things hang together so that it cannot be passed over with a bare statement of the fact of the Liberal-Radical defeat in Bevisham: the day was not without fruit in time to come for him whom his commiserating admirers of the non-voting sex all round the borough called the poor dear commander. Beauchamp's holiday out of England had incited Dr. Shrapnel to break a positive restriction put upon him by Jenny Denham, and actively pursue the canvass and the harangue in person; by which conduct, as Jenny had foreseen, many temperate electors were alienated from Commander Beauchamp, though no doubt the Radicals were made compact: for they may be the skirmishing faction—poor scattered fragments, none of them sufficiently downright for the other; each outstripping each; rudimentary emperors, elementary prophets, inspired physicians, nostrum-devouring

patients, whatsoever you will; and still here and there a man shall arise to march them in close columns, if they can but trust him; in perfect subordination, a model even for Tories while they keep shoulder to shoulder. And to behold such a disciplined body is intoxicating to the eye of a leader accustomed to count ahead upon vapourish abstractions, and therefore predisposed to add a couple of noughts to every tangible figure in his grasp. Thus will a realized fifty become five hundred or five thousand to him: the very sense of number is instinct with multiplication in his mind; and those years far on in advance, which he has been looking to with some fatigue to the optics, will suddenly and rollickingly roll up to him at the shutting of his eyes in a temporary fit of gratification. So, by looking and by not looking, he achieves his phantom victory—embraces his cloud.

Dr. Shrapnel conceived that the day was to be a Radical success; and he, a citizen aged and exercised in reverses, so rounded by the habit of them indeed as to tumble and recover himself on the wind of the blow that struck him, was, it must be acknowledged, staggered and cast down when he saw Beauchamp drop, knowing full well his regiment had polled to a man. Radicals poll early; they would poll at cockcrow if they might; they dance on the morning. As for their chagrin at noon, you will find descriptions of it in the poet's Inferno. They are for lifting our clay soil on a lever of Archimedes, and are not great mathematicians. They have perchance a foot of our earth, and perpetually do they seem to be producing an effect, perpetually does the whole land roll back on them. You have not surely to be reminded that it hurts them; the weight is immense. Dr. Shrapnel, however, speedily looked out again on his vast horizon, though prostrate. He regained his height of stature with no man's help. Success was but postponed for a

generation or two. Is it so very distant? Gaze on it with the eye of our parent orb! 'I shall not see it here; you may,' he said to Jenny Denham; and he fortified his outlook by saying to Mr. Lydiard that the Tories of our time walked, or rather stuck, in the track of the Radicals of a generation back. Note, then, that Radicals, always marching to the triumph, never taste it; and for Tories it is Dead Sea fruit, ashes in their mouths! Those Liberals, those temporisers, compromisers, a concourse of atoms! glorify themselves in the animal satisfaction of sucking the juice of the fruit, for which they pay with their souls. They have no true cohesion, for they have no vital principle.

Mr. Lydiard being a Liberal, bade the doctor not to forget the work of the Liberals, who touched on Tory and Radical with a pretty steady swing, from side to side, in the manner of the pendulum of a clock, which is the clock's life, remember that. The Liberals are the professors of the practicable in politics.

'A suitable image for time-servers!' Dr. Shrapnel exclaimed, intolerant of any mention of the Liberals as a party, especially in the hour of Radical discomfiture, when the fact that compromisers should exist exasperates men of a principle. 'Your Liberals are the band of Pyrrhus, an army of bastards, mercenaries professing the practicable for pay. They know us the motive force, the Tories the resisting power, and they feign to aid us in battering our enemy, that they may stop the shock. We fight, they profit. What are they? Stranded Whigs, crotchetty manufacturers; dissentient religionists; the half-minded, the hare-hearted; the I would and I would not —shifty creatures, with youth's enthusiasm decaying in them, and a purse beginning to jingle; fearing lest we do too much for safety, our enemy not enough for safety. They a party? Let them take action and see! *We*

stand a thousand defeats; they not one! Compromise begat them. Once let them leave sucking the teats of compromise, yea, once put on the air of men who fight and die for a cause, they fly to pieces. And whither the fragments? Chiefly, my friend, into the *Tory* ranks. Seriously so I say. You between future and past are for the present—but with the hunted look behind of all godless livers in the present. You Liberals are Tories with foresight, Radicals without faith. You start, in fear of Toryism, on an errand of Radicalism, and in fear of Radicalism to Toryism you draw back. There is your pendulum-swing!'

Lectures to this effect were delivered by Dr. Shrapnel throughout the day, for his private spiritual solace it may be supposed, unto Lydiard, Turbot, Beauchamp, or whomsoever the man chancing to be near him, and never did Sir Oracle wear so extraordinary a garb. The favourite missiles of the day were flour-bags. Dr. Shrapnel's uncommon height, and his outrageous long brown coat, would have been sufficient to attract them, without the reputation he had for desiring to subvert everything old English. The first discharges gave him the appearance of a thawing snowman. Drenchings of water turned the flour to ribs of paste, and in colour at least he looked legitimately the cook's own spitted hare, escaped from her basting ladle, elongated on two legs. It ensued that whenever he was caught sight of, as he walked unconcernedly about, the young street-professors of the decorative arts were seized with a frenzy to add their share to the whitening of him, until he might have been taken for a miller that had gone bodily through his meal. The popular cry proclaimed him a ghost, and he walked like one, impassive, blanched, and silent amid the uproar of mobs of jolly ruffians, for each of whom it was a point of honour to have a shy at old Shrapnel.

Clad in this preparation of pie-crust, he called from time to time at Beauchamp's hotel, and renewed his monologue upon that Radical empire in the future which was for ever in the future for the pioneers of men, yet not the less their empire. 'Do we live in our bodies?' quoth he, replying to his fiery interrogation: 'Ay, the Tories! the Liberals!' *They* lived in their bodies. Not one syllable of personal consolation did he vouchsafe to Beauchamp. He did not imagine it could be required by a man who had bathed in the pure springs of Radicalism; and it should be remarked that Beauchamp deceived him by imitating his air of happy abstraction, or subordination of the faculties to a distant view, comparable to a ship's crew in difficulties receiving the report of the man at the masthead. Beauchamp deceived Miss Denham too, and himself, by saying, as if he cherished the philosophy of defeat, besides the resolution to fight on:

'It 's only a skirmish lost, and that counts for nothing in a battle without end: it must be incessant.'

'But does incessant battling keep the intellect clear?' was her memorable answer.

He glanced at Lydiard, to indicate that it came of that gentleman's influence upon her mind. It was impossible for him to think that women thought. The idea of a pretty woman exercising her mind independently, and moreover moving him to examine his own, made him smile. Could a sweet-faced girl, the nearest to Renée in grace of manner and in feature of all women known to him, originate a sentence that would set him reflecting? He was unable to forget it, though he allowed her no credit for it.

On the other hand, his admiration of her devotedness to Dr. Shrapnel was unbounded. There shone a strictly feminine quality! according to the romantic visions of the sex entertained by Commander Beauchamp, and by

others who would be the objects of it. But not alone the passive virtues were exhibited by Jenny Denham: she proved that she had high courage. No remonstrance could restrain Dr. Shrapnel from going out to watch the struggle, and she went with him as a matter of course on each occasion. Her dress bore witness to her running the gauntlet beside him.

'It was not thrown at me purposely,' she said, to quiet Beauchamp's wrath. She saved the doctor from being roughly mobbed. Once when they were surrounded she fastened his arm under hers, and by simply moving on with an unswerving air of serenity obtained a passage for him. So much did she make herself respected, that the gallant rascals became emulous in dexterity to avoid powdering her, by loudly execrating any but dead shots at the detested one, and certain boys were maltreated for an ardour involving clumsiness. A young genius of this horde conceiving, in the spirit of the inventors of our improved modern ordnance, that it was vain to cast missiles which left a thing standing, hurled a stone wrapped in paper. It missed its mark. Jenny said nothing about it. The day closed with a comfortable fight or two in by-quarters of the town, probably to prove that an undaunted English spirit, spite of fickle Fortune, survived in our muscles.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TOUCHING A YOUNG LADY'S HEART AND HER INTELLECT

Mr. Tuckham found his way to Dr. Shrapnel's cottage to see his kinsman on the day after the election. There was a dinner in honour of the Members for Bevisham at

Mount Laurels in the evening, and he was five minutes behind military time when he entered the restive drawing-room and stood before the colonel. No sooner had he stated that he had been under the roof of Dr. Shrapnel, than his unpunctuality was immediately overlooked in the burst of impatience evoked by the name.

'That pestilent fellow!' Colonel Halkett ejaculated. 'I understand he has had the impudence to serve a notice on Grancey Lespel about encroachments on common land.'

Some one described Dr. Shrapnel's appearance under the flour storm.

'He deserves anything,' said the colonel, consulting his mantelpiece clock.

Captain Baskelett observed: 'I shall have my account to settle with Dr. Shrapnel.' He spoke like a man having a right to be indignant, but excepting that the doctor had bestowed nicknames upon him in a speech at a meeting, no one could discover the grounds for it. He nodded briefly. A Radical apple had struck him on the left cheek-bone as he performed his triumphal drive through the town, and a slight disfigurement remained, to which his hand was applied sympathetically at intervals, for the cheek-bone was prominent in his countenance, and did not well bear enlargement. And when a fortunate gentleman, desiring to be still more fortunate, would display the winning amiability of his character, distension of one cheek gives him an afflictingly false look of sweetness.

The bent of his mind, nevertheless, was to please Miss Halkett. He would be smiling, and intimately smiling. Aware that she had a kind of pitiful sentiment for Nevil, he smiled over Nevil—poor Nevil! 'I give you my word, Miss Halkett, old Nevil was off his head yesterday. I daresay he meant to be civil. I met him; I called out to him, "Good day, cousin, I 'm afraid you 're beaten":

and says he, "I fancy you 've gained it, *uncle*." He didn't know where he was; all abroad, poor boy. Uncle! —to me!'

Miss Halkett would have accepted the instance for a proof of Nevil's distraction, had not Mr. Seymour Austin, who sat beside her, laughed and said to her: 'I suppose "uncle" was a chance shot, but it 's equal to a poetic epithet in the light it casts on the story.' Then it seemed to her that Nevil had been keenly quick, and Captain Baskelett's impenetrability was a sign of his density. Her mood was to think Nevil Beauchamp only too quick, too adventurous and restless: one that wrecked brilliant gifts in a too general warfare; a lover of hazards, a hater of laws. Her eyes flew over Captain Baskelett as she imagined Nevil addressing him as uncle, and, to put aside a spirit of mockery rising within her, she hinted a wish to hear Seymour Austin's opinion of Mr. Tuckham. He condensed it in an interrogative tone: 'The *other* extreme?' The Tory extreme of Radical Nevil Beauchamp. She assented. Mr. Tuckham was at that moment prophesying the Torification of mankind; not as the trembling venturesome idea which we cast on doubtful winds, but as a ship is launched to ride the waters, with huzzas for a thing accomplished. Mr. Austin raised his shoulders imperceptibly, saying to Miss Halkett: 'The turn will come to us as to others—and go. Nothing earthly can escape *that* revolution. We have to meet it with a policy, and let it pass with measures carried and our hands washed of some of our party sins. I am, I hope, true to my party, but the enthusiasm of party I do not share. He is right, however, when he accuses the nation of cowardice for the last ten years. One third of the Liberals have been with us at heart, and dared not speak, and we dared not say what we wished. We accepted a compact that satisfied us both—satisfied *us*

better than when we were opposed by Whigs—that is, the Liberal reigned, and we governed: and I should add, a very clever juggler was our common chief. Now we have the consequences of hollow peacemaking, in a suffrage that bids fair to extend to the wearing of hats and boots for a qualification. The moral of it seems to be that cowardice is even worse for nations than for individual men, though the consequences come on us more slowly.'

'You spoke of party sins,' Miss Halkett said incredulously.

'I shall think we are the redoubtable party when we admit the charge.'

'Are you alluding to the landowners?'

'Like the land itself, they have rich veins in heavy matter. For instance, the increasing wealth of the country is largely recruiting our ranks; and we shall be tempted to mistake numbers for strength, and perhaps again be reading Conservatism for a special thing of our own—a fortification. That would be a party sin. Conservatism is a principle of government; the best because the safest for an old country; and the guarantee that we do not lose the wisdom of past experience in our struggle with what is doubtful. Liberalism stakes too much on the chance of gain. It is uncomfortably seated on half-a-dozen horses; and it has to feed them too, and on varieties of corn.'

'Yes,' Miss Halkett said, pausing, 'and I know you would not talk down to me, but the use of imagery makes me feel that I am addressed as a primitive intelligence.'

'That 's the fault of my trying at condensation, as the hieroglyphists put an animal for a paragraph. I am incorrigible, you see; but the lecture in prose must be for by-and-by, if you care to have it.'

'If you care to read it to me. Did a single hieroglyphic figure stand for so much?'

'I have never deciphered one.'

'You have been speaking to me too long in earnest, Mr. Austin!'

'I accept the admonition, though it is wider than the truth. Have you ever consented to listen to politics before?'

Cecilia reddened faintly, thinking of him who had taught her to listen, and of her previous contempt of the subject.

A political exposition devoid of imagery was given to her next day on the sunny South-western terrace of Mount Laurels, when it was only by mentally translating it into imagery that she could advance a step beside her intellectual guide; and she was ashamed of the volatility of her ideas. She was constantly comparing Mr. Austin and Nevil Beauchamp, seeing that the senior and the junior both talked to her with the familiar recognition of her understanding which was a compliment without the gross corporeal phrase. But now she made another discovery, that should have been infinitely more of a compliment, and it was bewildering, if not repulsive to her:—could it be credited? Mr. Austin was a firm believer in new and higher destinies for women. He went farther than she could concede the right of human speculation to go; he was, in fact, as Radical there as Nevil Beauchamp politically; and would not the latter innovator stare, perchance frown conservatively, at a prospect of woman taking counsel, *in council*, with men upon public affairs, like the women in the Germania! Mr. Austin, if this time he talked in earnest, deemed that Englishwomen were on the road to win such a promotion, and would win it ultimately. He said soberly that he saw more certain indications of the reality of progress among women than

any at present shown by men. And he was professedly temperate. He was but for opening avenues to the means of livelihood for them, and leaving it to their strength to conquer the position they might wish to win. His belief that they would do so was the revolutionary sign.

'Are there points of likeness between Radicals and Tories?' she inquired.

'I suspect a cousinship in extremes,' he answered.

'If one might be present at an argument!' said she.

'We have only to meet to fly apart as wide as the Poles,' Mr. Austin rejoined.

But she had not spoken of a particular person to meet him; and how, then, had she betrayed herself? She fancied he looked unwontedly arch as he resumed:

'The end of the argument would see us each entrenched in his party. Suppose me to be telling your Radical friend such truisms as that we English have not grown in a day, and were not originally made free and equal by decree; that we have grown, and must continue to grow, by the aid and the development of our strength; that ours is a fairly legible history, and a fair example of the good and the bad in human growth; that his landowner and his peasant have no clear case of right and wrong to divide them, one being the descendant of strong men, the other of weak ones; and that the former may sink, the latter may rise—there is no artificial obstruction; and if it is difficult to rise, it is easy to sink. Your Radical friend, who would bring them to a level by proclamation, could not adopt a surer method for destroying the manhood of a people: he is for doctoring wooden men, and I for not letting our stout English be cut down short as Laplanders; he would have them in a forcing house, and I in open air, as hitherto. Do you perceive a

discussion? and you apprehend the nature of it. We have nerves. That is why it is better for men of extremely opposite opinions not to meet. I dare say Radicalism has a function, and so long as it respects the laws I am ready to encounter it where it cannot be avoided. Pardon my prosing.'

'Recommend me some hard books to study through the Winter,' said Cecilia, refreshed by a discourse that touched no emotions, as by a febrifuge. Could Nevil reply to it? She fancied him replying, with that wild head of his—wildest of natures. She fancied also that her wish was like Mr. Austin's not to meet him. She was enjoying a little rest.

It was not quite generous in Mr. Austin to assume that 'her Radical friend' had been prompting her. However, she thanked him in her heart for the calm he had given her. To be able to imagine Nevil Beauchamp intellectually erratic was a tonic satisfaction to the proud young lady, ashamed of a bondage that the bracing and pointing of her critical powers helped her to forget. She had always preferred the society of men of Mr. Austin's age. How old was he? Her father would know. And why was he unmarried? A light frost had settled on the hair about his temples; his forehead was lightly wrinkled; but his mouth and smile, and his eyes, were lively as a young man's, with more in them. His age must be something less than fifty. O for peace! she sighed. When he stepped into his carriage, and stood up in it to wave adieu to her, she thought his face and figure a perfect example of an English gentleman in his prime.

Captain Baskelett requested the favour of five minutes of conversation with Miss Halkett before he followed Mr. Austin, on his way to Steynham.

She returned from that colloquy to her father and Mr.

Tuckham. The colonel looked straight in her face, with an elevation of the brows. To these points of interrogation she answered with a placid fall of her eyelids. He sounded a note of approbation in his throat.

All the company having departed, Mr. Tuckham for the first time spoke of his interview with his kinsman Beauchamp. Yesterday evening he had slurred it, as if he had nothing to relate, except the finding of an old schoolfellow at Dr. Shrapnel's named Lydiard, a man of ability fool enough to have turned author on no income. But that which had appeared to Miss Halkett a want of observancy, became attributable to depth of character on its being clear that he had waited for the departure of the transient guests of the house, to pour forth his impressions without holding up his kinsman to public scorn. He considered Shrapnel mad and Beauchamp mad. No such grotesque old monster as Dr. Shrapnel had he seen in the course of his travels. He had never listened to a madman running loose who was at all up to Beauchamp. At a loss for words to paint him, he said: 'Beauchamp seems to have a head like a firework manufactory, he 's perfectly pyrocephalic.' For an example of Dr. Shrapnel's talk: 'I happened,' said Mr. Tuckham, 'casually, meaning no harm, and not supposing I was throwing a lighted match on powder, to mention the word Providence. I found myself immediately confronted by Shrapnel—overtopped, I should say. He is a lank giant of about seven feet in height; the kind of show man that used to go about in caravans over the country; and he began rocking over me like a poplar in a gale, and cries out: "Stay there! away with that! Providence? Can you set a thought on Providence, not seeking to propitiate it? And have you not there the damning proof that you are at the foot of an Idol?"—The old idea about a special Providence, I suppose. These fellows have nothing new

but their trimmings. And he went on with: "Ay, invisible," and his arm chopping, "but an Idol! an Idol!" —I was to think of "nought but Laws." He admitted there might be one above the Laws. "To realize him is to fry the brains in their pan," says he, and struck his forehead a slap: and off he walked down the garden, with his hands at his coat-tails. I venture to say it may be taken for a proof of incipient insanity to care to hear such a fellow twice. And Beauchamp holds him up for a sage and a prophet!'

'He is a very dangerous dog,' said Colonel Halkett.

'The best of it is—and I take this for the strongest possible proof that Beauchamp is mad—Shrapnel stands for an *advocate of morality* against him. I 'll speak of it . . .'

Mr. Tuckham nodded to the colonel, who said: 'Speak out. My daughter has been educated for a woman of the world.'

'Well, sir, it 's nothing to offend a young lady's ears. Beauchamp is for socially enfranchising the sex—that is all. Quite enough. Not a whit politically. Love is to be the test: and if a lady ceases to love her husband . . . if she sets her fancy elsewhere, she 's bound to leave him. The laws are tyrannical, our objections are cowardly. Well, this Dr. Shrapnel harangued about society; and men as well as women are to sacrifice their passions *on that altar*. If he could burlesque himself it would be in coming out as a cleric—the old Pagan!'

'Did he convince Captain Beauchamp?' the colonel asked, manifestly for his daughter to hear the reply; which was: 'Oh dear, no!'

'Were you able to gather from Captain Beauchamp's remarks whether he is much disappointed by the result of the election?' said Cecilia.

Mr. Tuckham could tell her only that Captain Beauchamp was incensed against an elector named Tomlinson for withdrawing a promised vote on account of lying rumours, and elated by the conquest of a Mr. Carpendike, who was reckoned a tough one to drag by the neck. 'The only sane people in the house are a Miss Denham and the cook: I lunched there,' Mr. Tuckham nodded approvingly. 'Lydiard must be mad. What he 's wasting his time there for I can't guess. He says he 's engaged there in writing a prefatory essay to a new publication of Harry Denham's poems—whoever that may be. And why writing it there? I don't like it. He ought to be earning his bread. He 'll be sure to be borrowing money by-and-by. We 've got ten thousand too many fellows writing already, and they 've seen a few inches of the world, on the Continent! He can write. But it 's all unproductive—dead weight on the country, these fellows with their writings! He says Beauchamp's praise of Miss Denham is quite deserved. He tells me, that at great peril to herself—and she nearly had her arm broken by a stone—she saved Shrapnel from rough usage on the election-day.'

'Hum!' Colonel Halkett grunted significantly.

'So I thought,' Mr. Tuckham responded. 'One doesn't want the man to be hurt, but he ought to be put down in some way. My belief is he 's a Fire-worshipper. I warrant I would extinguish him if he came before me. He 's an incendiary, at any rate.'

'Do you think,' said Cecilia, 'that Captain Beauchamp is now satisfied with his experience of politics?'

'Dear me, no,' said Mr. Tuckham. 'It 's the opening of a campaign. He 's off to the North, after he has been to Sussex and Bucks. He 's to be at it all his life. One thing he shows common sense in. If I heard him once I heard him say half-a-dozen times, that he must have

money:—"*I must have money!*" And so he must if he 's to head the Radicals. He wants to start a newspaper! Is he likely to get money from his uncle Romfrey?'

'Not for his present plan of campaign.' Colonel Halkett enunciated the military word sarcastically. 'Let 's hope he won't get money.'

'He says he must have it.'

'Who is to stand and deliver, then?'

'I don't know; I only repeat what he says: unless he has an eye on my Aunt Beauchamp; and I doubt his luck there, if he wants money for political campaigning.'

'Money!' Colonel Halkett ejaculated.

That word too was in the heart of the heiress.

Nevil must have money! Could he have said it? Ordinary men might say or think it inoffensively; Captain Baskelett, for instance: but not Nevil Beauchamp.

Captain Baskelett, as she had conveyed the information to her father for his comfort in the dumb domestic language familiar between them on these occasions, had proposed to her unavailingly. Italian and English gentlemen were in the list of her rejected suitors: and hitherto she had seen them come and go, one might say, from a watchtower in the skies. None of them was the ideal she waited for: what their feelings were, their wishes, their aims, she had not reflected on. They dotted the landscape beneath the unassailable heights, busy after their fashion, somewhat quaint, much like the pigmy husbandmen in the fields were to the giant's daughter, who had more curiosity than Cecilia. But Nevil Beauchamp had compelled her to quit her lofty station, pulled her low as the littlest of women that throb and flush at one man's footstep: and being well able to read the nature and aspirations of Captain Baskelett, it was with the knowledge of her having been proposed

to as heiress of a great fortune that she chanced to hear of Nevil's resolve to have money. If he did say it! And was anything likelier? was anything unlikelier? His foreign love denied to him, why, now he devoted himself to money: money—the last consideration of a man so single-mindedly generous as he! But he must have money to pursue his contest! But would he forfeit the truth in him for money for any purpose?

The debate on this question grew as incessant as the thought of him.

Was it not to be supposed that the madness of the pursuit of his political chimaera might change his character?

She hoped he would not come to Mount Laurels, thinking she should esteem him less if he did; knowing that her defence of him, on her own behalf, against herself, depended now on an esteem lodged perhaps in her wilfulness. Yet if he did not come, what an Arctic world!

He came on a November afternoon when the woods glowed, and no sun. The day was narrowed in mist from earth to heaven: a moveless and possessing mist. It left space overhead for one wreath of high cloud mixed with touches of washed red upon moist blue, still as the mist, insensibly passing into it. Wet webs crossed the grass, chill in the feeble light. The last flowers of the garden bowed to decay. Dead leaves, red and brown and spotted yellow, fell straight around the stems of trees, lying thick. The glow was universal, and the chill.

Cecilia sat sketching the scene at a window of her study, on the level of the drawing-room, and he stood by outside till she saw him. He greeted her through the glass, then went round to the hall door, giving her time to recover, if only her heart had been less shaken.

Their meeting was like the features of the day she set her brush to picture: characteristic of a season rather than cheerless in tone, though it breathed little cheer. Is there not a pleasure in contemplating that which is characteristic? Her unfinished sketch recalled him after he had gone: he lived in it, to startle her again, and bid her heart gallop and her cheeks burn. The question occurred to her: May not one love, not craving to be beloved? Such a love does not sap our pride, but supports it; increases rather than diminishes our noble self-esteem. To attain such a love the martyrs writhed up to the crown of saints. For a while Cecilia revelled in the thought that she could love in this most saintlike manner. How they fled, the sordid ideas of him which accused him of the world's one passion, and were transferred to her own bosom in reproach that she should have imagined them existing in his! He talked simply and sweetly of his defeat, of time wasted away from the canvass, of loss of money: and he had little to spare, he said. The water-colour drawing interested him. He said he envied her that power of isolation, and the eye for beauty in every season. She opened a portfolio of Mr. Tuckham's water-colour drawings in every clime; scenes of Europe, Asia, and the Americas; and he was to be excused for not caring to look through them. His remark, that they seemed hard and dogged, was not so unjust, she thought, smiling to think of the critic criticized. His wonderment that a young man like his Lancastrian cousin should be 'an unmitigated Tory' was perhaps natural.

Cecilia said, 'Yet I cannot discern in him a veneration for aristocracy.'

'That 's not wanted for modern Toryism,' said Nevil. 'One may venerate old families when they show the blood of the founder, and are not dead wood. I do. And I believe the blood of the founder, though the man

may have been a savage and a robber, had in his day finer elements in it than were common. But let me say at a meeting that I respect true aristocracy, I hear a growl and a hiss beginning: why? Don't judge them hastily: because the people have seen the aristocracy opposed to the cause that was weak, and only submitting to it when it commanded them to resist at their peril; clinging to traditions, and not anywhere standing for humanity: much more a herd than the people themselves. Ah! well, we won't talk of it now. I say that is no aristocracy, if it does not head the people in virtue—military, political, national: I mean the qualities required by the times for leadership. I won't bother you with my ideas now. I love to see you paint-brush in hand.'

Her brush trembled on the illumination of a scarlet maple. 'In this country we were not originally made free and equal by decree, Nevil.'

'No,' said he, 'and I cast no blame on our farthest ancestors.'

It struck her that this might be an outline of a reply to Mr. Austin.

'So you have been thinking over it?' he asked.

'Not to conclusions,' she said, trying to retain in her mind the evanescent suggestiveness of his previous remark, and vexed to find herself upon nothing but a devious phosphorescent trail there.

Her forehead betrayed the unwonted mental action. He cried out for pardon. 'What right have I to bother you? I see it annoys you. The truth is, I came for peace. I think of you when they talk of English homes.'

She felt then that he was comparing her home with another, a foreign home. After he had gone she felt that there had been a comparison of two persons. She remembered one of his observations: 'Few women seem to have

courage'; when his look at her was for an instant one of scrutiny or calculation. Under a look like that we perceive that we are being weighed. She had no clue to tell her what it signified.

Glorious and solely glorious love, that has risen above emotion, quite independent of craving! That is to be the bird of upper air, poised on his wings. It is a home in the sky. Cecilia took possession of it systematically, not questioning whether it would last; like one who is too enamoured of the habitation to object to be a tenant-at-will. If it was cold, it was in recompense immeasurably lofty, a star-girdled place; and dwelling in it she could avow to herself the secret which was now working self-deception, and still preserve her pride unwounded. Her womanly pride, she would have said in vindication of it: but Cecilia Halkett's pride went far beyond the merely womanly.

Thus she was assisted to endure a journey down to Wales, where Nevil would surely not be. She passed a Winter without seeing him. She returned to Mount Laurels from London at Easter, and went on a visit to Steynham, and back to London, having sight of him nowhere, still firm in the thought that she loved ethereally, to bless, forgive, direct, encourage, pray for him, impersonally. She read certain speeches delivered by Nevil at assemblies of Liberals or Radicals, which were reported in papers in the easy irony of the style of here and there a sentence, here and there a summary: salient quotations interspersed with running abstracts: a style terrible to friends of the speaker so reported, overwhelming if they differ in opinion: yet her charity was a match for it. She was obliged to have recourse to charity, it should be observed. Her father drew her attention to the spectacle of R. C. S. Nevil Beauchamp, Commander R.N., fighting those reporters with letters in the newspapers,

and the dry editorial comment flanked by three stars on the left. He was shocked to see a gentleman writing such letters to the papers. 'But one thing hangs on another,' said he.

'But you seem angry with Nevil, papa,' said she.

'I do hate a turbulent, restless fellow, my dear,' the colonel burst out.

'Papa, he has really been unfairly reported.'

Cecilia laid three privately-printed full reports of Commander Beauchamp's speeches (very carefully corrected by him) before her father.

He suffered his eye to run down a page. 'Is it possible you read this?—this trash!—dangerous folly, I call it.'

Cecilia's reply, 'In the interests of justice, I do,' was meant to express her pure impartiality. By a toleration of what is detested we expose ourselves to the keenness of an adverse mind.

'Does he write to you, too?' said the colonel.

She answered: 'Oh, no; I am not a politician.'

'He seems to have expected you to read those tracts of his, though.'

'Yes, I think he would convert me if he could,' said Cecilia.

'Though you 're not a politician.'

'He relies on the views he delivers in public, rather than on writing to persuade; that was my meaning, papa.'

'Very well,' said the colonel, not caring to show his anxiety.

Mr. Tuckham dined with them frequently in London. This gentleman betrayed his accomplishments one by one. He sketched, and was no artist; he planted, and was no gardener; he touched the piano neatly, and was no musician; he sang, and he had no voice. Apparently

he tried his hand at anything, for the privilege of speaking decisively upon all things. He accompanied the colonel and his daughter on a day's expedition to Mrs. Beauchamp, on the Upper Thames, and they agreed that he shone to great advantage in her society. Mrs. Beauchamp said she had seen her great-nephew Nevil, but without a comment on his conduct or his person; grave silence. Reflecting on it, Cecilia grew indignant at the thought that Mr. Tuckham might have been acting a sinister part. Mrs. Beauchamp alluded to a newspaper article of her favourite great-nephew Blackburn, written, Cecilia knew through her father, to controvert some tremendous proposition of Nevil's. *That* was writing, Mrs. Beauchamp said. 'I am not in the habit of fearing a conflict, so long as we have stout defenders. I rather like it,' she said.

The colonel entertained Mrs. Beauchamp, while Mr. Tuckham led Miss Halkett over the garden. Cecilia considered that his remarks upon Nevil were insolent.

'Seriously, Miss Halkett, to take him at his best, he is a very good fellow, I don't doubt; I am told so; and a capital fellow among men, a good friend and not a bad boonfellow, and for that matter, the smoking-room is a better test than the drawing-room; all he wants is emphatically school—school—school. I have recommended the simple iteration of that one word in answer to him at his meetings, and the printing of it as a foot-note to his letters.'

Cecilia's combative spirit precipitated her to say, 'I hear the mob in it shouting Captain Beauchamp down.'

'Ay,' said Mr. Tuckham, 'it would be setting the mob to shout wisely at last.'

'The mob is a wild beast.'

'Then we should hear wisdom coming out of the mouth of the wild beast.'

'Men have the phrase, "fair play."'

'Fair play, I say, is not applicable to a man who deliberately goes about to stir the wild beast. He is laughed at, plucked, hustled, and robbed, by those who deafen him with their "plaudits"—their roars. Did you see his advertisement of a great-coat, lost at some rapscallion gathering down in the North, near my part of the country? A great-coat and a packet of letters. He offers a reward of £10. But that 's honest robbery compared with the bleeding he 'll get.'

'Do you know Mr. Seymour Austin?' Miss Halkett asked him.

'I met him once at your father's table. Why?'

'I think you would like to listen to him.'

'Yes, my fault is not listening enough,' said Mr. Tuckham.

He was capable of receiving correction.

Her father told her he was indebted to Mr. Tuckham past payment in coin, for services rendered by him on a trying occasion among the miners in Wales during the first spring month. 'I dare say he can speak effectively to miners,' Cecilia said, outvying the contemptuous young man in superciliousness, but with effort and not with satisfaction.

She left London in July, two days before her father could be induced to return to Mount Laurels. Feverish, and strangely subject to caprices now, she chose the longer way round by Sussex, and alighted at the station near Steynham to call on Mrs. Culling, whom she knew to be at the Hall, preparing it for Mr. Romfrey's occupation. In imitation of her father she was Rosamund's fast friend, though she had never quite realized her position, and did not thoroughly understand her. Would it not please her father to hear that she had chosen the tedious route for the purpose of visiting this lady, whose champion he was?

So she went to Steynham, and for hours she heard talk of no one, of nothing, but her friend Nevil. Cecilia was on her guard against Rosamund's defence of his conduct in France. The declaration that there had been no misbehaviour at all could not be accepted; but the news of Mr. Romfrey 's having installed Nevil in Holdesbury to manage that property, and of his having mooted to her father the question of an alliance between her and Nevil, was wonderful. Rosamund could not say what answer her father had made: hardly favourable, Cecilia supposed, since he had not spoken of the circumstance to her. But Mr. Romfrey's influence with him would certainly be powerful.

It was to be assumed, also, that Nevil had been consulted by his uncle. Rosamund said full-heartedly that this alliance had for years been her life's desire, and then she let the matter pass, nor did she once look at Cecilia searchingly, or seem to wish to probe her. Cecilia disagreed with Rosamund on an insignificant point in relation to something Mr. Romfrey and Captain Baskelett had done, and, as far as she could recollect subsequently, there was a packet of letters, or a pocket-book containing letters of Nevil's which he had lost, and which had been forwarded to Mr. Romfrey; for the pocket-book was originally his, and his address was printed inside. But among these letters was one from Dr. Shrapnel to Nevil: a letter so horrible that Rosamund frowned at the reminiscence of it, holding it to be too horrible for the quotation of a sentence. She owned she had forgotten any three consecutive words. Her known dislike of Captain Baskelett, however, was insufficient to make her see that it was unjustifiable in him to run about London reading it, with comments of the cruellest. Rosamund's greater detestation of Dr. Shrapnel blinded her to the offence committed by the man she would otherwise have

been very ready to scorn. So small did the circumstance appear to Cecilia, notwithstanding her gentle opposition at the time she listened to it, that she never thought of mentioning it to her father, and only remembered it when Captain Baskelett, with Lord Palmet in his company, presented himself at Mount Laurels, and proposed to the colonel to read to him 'a letter from that scoundrelly old Shrapnel to Nevil Beauchamp, upon women, wives, thrones, republics, British loyalty, et cætera,'—an et cætera that rolled a series of tremendous reverberations down the list of all things held precious by freeborn Englishmen.

She would have prevented the reading. But the colonel would have it.

'Read on,' said he. 'Mr. Romfrey saw no harm.'

Captain Baskelett held up Dr. Shrapnel's letter to Commander Beauchamp, at about half a yard's distance on the level of his chin, as a big-chested singer in a concert-room holds his music-scroll.

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